

A Rhetorical Approach to the Historical Performance of Keyboard Music: 1740–1830

D i s s e r t a t i o n

zur

Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doktor der Philosophie

in der Philosophischen Fakultät

der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen

Vorgelegt von

Anders Cornelis Muskens

aus

Edmonton, Alberta, Kanada

2026

**Gedruckt mit Genehmigung der Philosophischen Fakultät
der Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen**

Dekanin: Prof. Dr. Angelika Zirker

Hauptberichterstatter:in: Prof. Dr. Matthew Gardner

Mitberichterstatter:in: Prof. Dr. Stefan Morent

Tag der mündlichen Prüfung: 28. Mai 2026

Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen – TOBIAS-lib

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors—Matthew Gardner, Jed Wentz, and Stefan Morent—for their guidance, insight, and steady support throughout this project. I am especially indebted to Jed Wentz for his generous acting coaching, sustained even through the difficult conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, and for the energizing, productive exchanges at Dutch Historical Acting Collective meetings once it was possible to gather again. Beyond this, I thank him for his inspiration and example, and for the encouragement to remain—despite everything—a real artist: curious, brave, and uncompromising in the pursuit of art.

I also wish to thank Frans De Bruyn (University of Ottawa, Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies) for helping me conceptualize my work within a broader eighteenth-century cultural framework, and for his careful editorial input and encouragement. My thanks likewise go to Hong Yu Wong, Krisztina Orbán, and Julia Peters. The philosophical discussions we had on many of the subjects addressed in this thesis helped sharpen my thinking around the aesthetic psychology of the eighteenth century. For help with translation, I would like to acknowledge Fabian Kubsch for assisting with translating Johann Nikolaus Forkel's *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland, 1784*, and Sonja Frieze for helping to proofread many of the German text transcriptions, and for making sure I did not starve during the final stretch.

I am deeply grateful to Petra Pechaček (Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg; Leiterin Bereich Entwicklung, Sammlungen, Besucherangebote) for granting access to the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg, which made it possible to undertake the artistic research experiments central to this study. I again thank Sonja Frieze here for her historical hair styling, technical assistance during filming in Ludwigsburg, and for her practical guidance in supporting the experimental work on site.

I gratefully acknowledge the financial support that made this research possible, including funding from the *Landesgraduiertenförderung* through the University of Tübingen and the Baden-Württemberg government, several scholarships from Student Aid Alberta, and support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Finally, I acknowledge the use of OpenAI's ChatGPT for editing. This means that it was used for smoothing and improving the style of my prose, but the ideas presented remain my own. I also used DeepL for translation assistance. I was solely responsible for the creative content, arguments, analysis, source work, artistic interpretations, and citation style; all information and sources were checked against the primary literature.

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List of Abbreviations

BHB	Beethoven-Haus Bonn
C.F.D. Schubart	Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart
C.P.E. Bach	Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach
CWF	Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
DHAC	Dutch Historical Acting Collective
E.T.A. Hoffmann	Ernst Theodor Amadeus Hoffmann
ed.	Edited by
HIP	Historically Informed Performance
J.C. Bach	Johann Christian Bach
J.S. Bach	Johann Sebastian Bach
b., bb.	Bar, bars
MGG	Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart Online
NMA	Neue Mozart Ausgabe
PHI	Packard Humanities Institute, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, the Complete Works
SBB	Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin
trans.	Translated by
vol. / vols.	volume / volumes
W.F. Bach	Wilhelm Friedemann Bach

Introduction

Research Question: How can classical rhetoric — as it was understood in the age of sensibility and early Romanticism (roughly 1740–1830) — provide a practical, historically inspired method for interpreting and performing keyboard music of that same period?

In his famous treatise on keyboard playing, the *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (first edition, 1753), Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach wrote that a musician must be possessed of true inner feeling. Likewise, “he cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all of the affects that he hopes to arouse in his audience, for the revealing of his own humour will stimulate a like humour in the listener.”¹ Such a notion was seemingly shared by many of Bach’s contemporaries and successors. In a 1782 letter to his father, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart criticized a performance by his pianist colleague, Muzio Clementi. Mozart derides Clementi for empty virtuosity, lacking feeling and taste: a mere “*Mechanicus*” at the keyboard.² Whether or not these remarks were sincere or fuelled by rivalry, Mozart here implies a shared common ground with his father: that musical performance cannot be solely based on technique but requires animation by genuine feeling that is shaped by taste. Similar in spirit is the oft-quoted maxim attributed to Ludwig van Beethoven: “To play wrong notes is insignificant. To play without passion is inexcusable.” While this exact quote is probably apocryphal, it is representative of a philosophy held by Beethoven, passed down by his student Ferdinand Ries³—one that follows the line of thought from Mozart and Bach.

This ongoing critique in late eighteenth-century musical aesthetics finds a close analogue in classical rhetorical theory. In the last years of his life, the Roman statesman, lawyer, and orator Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE) wrote a work called *Brutus*. He presents it as a conversation between himself and two figures: Marcus Junius Brutus, a young aristocrat known for defending the old ideals of the Roman Republic, and Titus Pomponius Atticus, a well-connected Roman intellectual and Cicero’s close friend. In this imagined dialogue, they ask Cicero to recount how Roman public speaking developed — who the great orators were, what made them effective, and how style and eloquence changed over time. Through this staged conversation, Cicero not only gives a history of Roman oratory but also argues for his own place within that tradition. Describing his colleague Marcus Calpurnius, Cicero

¹ Indem ein Musicus nicht anders rühren kan, er sey dann selbst gerührt; so muß er nothwendig sich selbst in alle Affecten setzen können. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: in Verlegung des Auctoris, 1753), Part I, p. 122 (§13); quoted in Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p. 152.

² Wolfgang Amadé Mozart, ‘Wolfgang Amadé Mozart an Leopold Mozart in Salzburg, Wien, 12. Januar 1782’ (Bauer/Deutsch Nr. 657), *Mozart Letters and Documents – Online Edition* (Digital Mozart Edition), Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg / Packard Humanities Institute; Accessed 24 January 2026, <https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/letter.php?cat=&mid=1223>.

³ See Katalin Komlós, “After Mozart: The Viennese Piano Scene in the 1790s”, *Studia Musicologica* 49/ 1/2 (2008), p. 44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25598311>.

praised his sublime, elegant language: each word placed like a stone in a mosaic, neither awkward nor overly ornate, enriched by subtle rhythms and tasteful rhetorical figures. His delivery was dignified, comprehensible, and well-organized. Yet Cicero highlights a crucial flaw: Calidius lacked emotional conviction—or at least the appearance of it. During an impassioned prosecution of Quintus Gallius—accused of a poisoning plot—Calidius calmly presented a wealth of evidence, from written proof to confessions. Cicero, defending Gallius, seized on the contrast:

‘Come now, Marcus Calidius, would you present your case in that way if it were not all a figment of your imagination? What trace of anger, of that burning indignation, which stirs even men quite incapable of eloquence to loud outbursts of complaint against wrongs? But no hint of agitation in you, neither of mind nor of body! Did you smite your brow, slap your thigh, or at least stamp your foot? No. In fact, so far from touching my feelings, I could scarcely refrain from going to sleep then and there.’⁴

Calidius’s restraint drained his arguments of credibility. Without visceral delivery—tones of voice, gesture, emotion—his speech, however technically well-formed and “correct,” felt hollow. According to Cicero, strong oratory demands not just sound arguments, but emotional embodiment. Without it, even a compelling case can seem like “a figment of imagination.”

Just as Cicero argued that rhetoric devoid of visible feeling fails to convince, C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven comparably insisted that emotion must drive musical performance. Whether delivering a speech or playing a sonata, these sources argue that performers must feel the intensity of their message. Technical precision is admirable, but is empty in itself when not animated by true “feeling.” It is therefore worth asking what “expressing emotions” might have actually meant in the mindset of these writers and the period in general: what did it mean to play with feeling, to express effectively, or to move an audience? This study approaches these questions by looking to the period’s cultural paradigm of classical rhetoric, a framework that penetrated musical thought and practice. To this end, this study examines how the classical art of rhetoric shaped musical composition and performance during the age of sensibility and early Romanticism (c. 1740–1830), first to deepen a musicological and historical-aesthetic understanding of what expressive “feeling” meant to performers in its own terms, and then—building on that foundation—to propose a rhetorical approach for modern historically informed performance (HIP) of keyboard music from the same period.

Rhetorical study has had a long cultural impact — one not limited to just the verbal arts of oratory and literature. Eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century theorists emphasized crucial links between rhetoric and the musical arts. Each mode of expression shaped the other, and both aimed to communicate and persuade by three means: demonstrating the character and credibility of the speaker

⁴ Cicero, *Brutus*, trans. and ed. G. L. Hendrickson, H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library 342 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1939), LXXX. pp. 276–89.

(*ethos*), the clarity and soundness of the argument (*logos*), and appeals to the emotions (*pathos*). Rhetoric guided musical composers and performers alike, who sought to capture the hearts and minds of listeners through artistic expression. It provided composers, performers, and audience members with a shared conceptual vocabulary that encompassed everything from formal design to effective emotional expression—arguably well into the Romantic era. Apart from the musicological value of understanding this historically situated framework, adopting such a framework for modern performers could allow them not only to remain faithful to the sources and historical context, but also to more closely pursue the aesthetic aims of the era. This means promoting ways of working that access the logic and affective strategies “sealed” in a musical score, presumably making it more engaging for listeners who resonate with the emotions expressed. Establishing such a framework, which manifests as a set of techniques, “best practices” and “considerations” for the performer, could provide them with governing principles to understand how to interpret sources on performance, negotiate historical performance practices into their own practice, and guide their own artistic voice through structured paths of creativity. In short, it could give them a kind of artistic agency to express something of their own through their art.

Cicero’s assertion on the importance of emotional conviction is arguably no less relevant in the early twenty-first century, especially in musical performance. A concert where the audience is lulled to sleep by an emotionally sterile performance certainly falls far short of rhetorical ambitions as the ancients and early moderns understood them. In the present day, where “classical music” faces increasing challenges to its relevance as mainstream interest declines, several questions arise. Do modern musicians sufficiently consider the goal of captivating their listeners by expressing thoughts and emotions with suitable force? And when musicians weigh such considerations, do they have the requisite tools or training to deliver? Even if some performers have an intuition for *pathos*, can this be refined further? More questions arise when rhetoric is used specifically to guide the performance of musical repertoire from 1740–1830: how can an approach informed by a rhetorical framework enhance historically informed performances of music today? What can the modern performer learn from historical models of emotionally embodied performance, that sought to use genuine feeling to animate conventionalized signs like tones of voice, faces, attitudes, and gestures? How can classical rhetoric be applied not as a scholastic catalogue of figures, but as an active, living discipline, and practice; a dynamic, structured approach to both musical creativity and real-time aesthetic evaluation, which a rhetorical performer can employ to hone their craft?

The performing arts, such as music and acting, are inherently complex forms of study and practice, requiring the integration of embodied physical and psychological processes within performers, precise mastery of artistic techniques, and negotiation with aesthetic frameworks, all of which are continually reshaped in a feedback loop by audience response and real-time spontaneity. Musical performance is an embodied act: performing on a harpsichord or early piano is a physical process, akin to acting, in which shifts in bodily state and affective motion directly shape how sound emerges from

the instrument. In this way, the body creates what the listener hears. Within this context, classical rhetorical practice and music-making could be understood as fundamentally bound to embodiment and to this same logic of transmission. Rhetorical strategies in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were intensely preoccupied with the immediate experience of emotional states—tenderness, agitation, awe, longing, daring, despairing—and with making those states present in both speaker and listener. Musical performance of the period may therefore be read as a parallel form of rhetorical delivery: musical features are not merely technical matters, but evocative of bodily expressions, analogous to the orator’s voice, face, and gesture.

Importance of the Study

The central musicological value of this study lies in its re-examination of rhetoric and notions of “feeling” and personally-authentic artistic expression during 1740–1830. In a productive reframing of the historical account, this study specifically challenges some standard musicological accounts of musical rhetoric by treating it as more than a compositional/analytical toolkit or a “rationalized” semiotic doctrine of affects that supposedly declines around 1800. Instead, the present study argues that rhetoric’s decisive force lies in *actio*—embodied delivery, audience response, and the real-time production of affect. On this basis, it offers a productive reframing of continuity and transformation across the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, without defaulting to narratives of rupture or “death.” The nature of this alternative will be explained in greater detail in the Literature Review below.

The secondary musicological value of this study is to offer a new theory and vision for modern HIP. Because of its central role in the eighteenth-century conception of music, rhetorical study is arguably essential for modern musicians interested in historically informed performance practice. This is especially of importance today because most twenty-first-century performers lack the cultural context rhetoric provided for eighteenth-century musicians. Hence, their culturally guided intuitions will not lead them to the same “rhetorical” solutions. Not only is the practical discipline of classical rhetoric absent from modern education, but the twenty-first-century tendency towards post-modern characteristics such as objectivity, irony, emotional detachment, and emotional disruption for the sake of “critical evaluation” often leads to the disdain for and dismissal of the sentimental. Here, rhetoric is viewed as histrionic, dissuading interest in engaging with it, despite it being one of the essential ingredients in late eighteenth-century aesthetics and artistic culture. Consequently, sentimentalism lies at the core of musical spirit of the period. Engaging with this music in its historical aesthetic context could therefore help to examine what it sought to express and how it aimed to do so.

Bruce Haynes, who has written on the history of historical performance practice, suggests that a break between “Romantic” and “modernist” performance approaches occurred in the postwar era. Accordingly, in an effort to expunge “excessive” — and potentially subversive — Romanticist expression, mainstream classical music performers and early music pioneers favoured an emotionally

cold, objective, “reptilian,” modernist style; a literal, urtext approach in which uniformity, regularity, and flawless technical execution were favoured—what Haynes drily calls “chops but no soul.”⁵ Seemingly, elements of this outlook persist to this day, including the modern propensity to “click track baroque,” as Haynes terms it, a hyper-cleanliness in performance, whereby any daring, non-uniformity, spontaneous or intuitive modifications, or deviations from text are curtailed by a desire for a sterile orderliness.⁶ Such tendencies are clearly a product of twentieth-century thinking rather than faithfulness to eighteenth-century artistic conceptions, and as will be proposed in this study, are antithetical to the spirit of the sentimentalist and early Romanticist. While much progress has been made in researching historical performance practices, as attested by the success of the period instrument revival, a key element remains missing if objectivity displaces *pathos* in the approach.

However, the objective of this study is not to disparage other practitioners who favour more twenty-first-century approaches. Modern musicians have the artistic freedom to perform however they like, and advocating for “authenticity policing” is certainly not the intention of this study. Many talented modern performers have an intuition for emotional expression and are quite capable of eliciting *pathos* in an audience. But a study of theoretical and practical classical rhetorical strategies can enhance these capabilities further: refining them and rendering them increasingly effective at moving audiences, while providing stylistic guidance and taste. As the Scottish rhetorical theorist Hugh Blair argued in his influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (1783),⁷ the rules of rhetoric may not have the power to inspire “natural genius” (talent), but they can “direct and assist it” in their ability to “point out proper models for imitation,” “bring into view the chief beauties that ought to be studied,” and the “principal faults that ought to be avoided;” hence, they “enlighten taste” and “lead genius from unnatural deviations” to its “proper channel.”⁸

Though the physiological theories of the eighteenth century (e.g., animal spirits, nervous vibrations) are outdated by modern standards, they nonetheless stem from close empirical observation of emotional response. Philosophers such as John Locke, Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith, David Hume, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Edmund Burke, Alexander Gerard, and Johann Georg Sulzer further reinforced the connection between perceptual experience, sentiment, moral judgment, and aesthetic evaluation. Their writings form a mechanistic, conceptual basis for an aesthetic psychology of affect that, while historically situated, continues to offer compelling ways of understanding the human condition and artworks of the period. Interestingly, such theories align with modern embodied

⁵ Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer’s History of Music for the Twenty-First century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 48.

⁶ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, p. 60.

⁷ This source was available in a period German translation as *Vorlesungen über Rhetorik und Schöne Wissenschaften. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt v. K.G. Schreiter* (Liegnitz und Leipzig: Bey David Siegert 1785, 1786).

⁸ Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres*, 3rd edition, vol. I (London: Printed for A. Strahan, T. Cadell, in the Strand, and W. Creech in Edinburgh, 1787), pp. 7–8.

neurocognitive theories. Contemporary embodied cognition research suggests that perception and action may be tightly coupled; this makes historical delivery-based strategies a plausible, testable route for heightening audience engagement. These insights build on an embodied philosophy of mind, emphasizing how cognition arises through active bodily engagement with the environment⁹ — a theory that on the surface shares many characteristics with the Lockean empiricism of the Enlightenment. Given that past theorists intuitively understood the power of expressing emotions through the body via natural signs like tones, looks, and gestures, this invites re-examining historical theories, bringing them once more into contemporary discourse. This is done not out of a misplaced nostalgia or historicism, but to better understand the expressive core of one of the most important periods in western thought, art, and music. While testing the scientific basis and effectiveness of rhetorical strategies lies beyond the scope of this study, the alignment of historical practice with contemporary findings suggests these historical strategies could indeed work today. This convergence opens a compelling avenue for future research: an empirical aesthetics study could directly test whether re-enacting embodied expressive techniques heightens audience engagement in declamation or music performance. Possibilities for reviving the modern relevance and accessibility of classical music are nonetheless worth exploring.

Literature Review

The relationship between rhetoric and eighteenth-century music is well-established in the standard musicological literature. This study largely builds upon this foundation, but also challenges certain interpretations and provides an alternative *actio*-focused view of musical rhetoric that extends beyond the year 1800. In contrast to accounts that treat rhetoric chiefly as a compositional toolbox, this study shifts the emphasis toward delivery, embodiment, and reception. At the same time, it questions the familiar story of a sharp break or “death” of rhetoric around 1800 and instead traces lines of continuity into early nineteenth-century thought and performance. Finally, it challenges the notion of “rationalized affects” and the semiotic models that underlie the standard literature, approaching affect as a psychosomatic, disruptive force rather than a stable signified, and brings musical rhetoric into dialogue with contemporaneous acting and elocutionary theory through practice-led work with keyboard repertoire. The following section outlines the standard narrative in order to clarify these points of departure.

Standard Musicological Theories of Musical Rhetoric

In standard Anglophone musicological literature, musical rhetoric is usually framed as a long but ultimately finite episode in which rhetorical theory functioned primarily as a compositional metalanguage. McCreless’s chapter “Music and rhetoric” in the *Cambridge History of Western Music*

⁹ See Vittorio Gallese, “Bodily selves in relation: Embodied simulation as second-person perspective on intersubjectivity”, *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 369/1644 (2014), 20130177. Vittorio Gallese, “Visions of the body: Embodied simulation and aesthetic experience”, *Aisthesis. Pratiche, Linguaggi E Saperi dell’estetico*, 10/1 (2017), pp. 41–50. <https://doi.org/10.13128/Aisthesis-20902>.

Theory treats rhetoric as the “original metalanguage of discourse in the West”¹⁰ and identifies a specifically German *musica poetica* tradition, roughly 1550–1800, in which the ancient canons of oratory (*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, with *memoria* and *pronuntiatio/actio* in the background) were directly mapped onto compositional pedagogy. German theorists from Nicolaus Listenius and Joachim Burmeister to Johann Mattheson and Johann Adolf Scheibe are presented as importing the apparatus of rhetoric into music to create a rational, teachable system for generating and ordering musical ideas. However, in McCreless’s characterization, by the early eighteenth-century, rhetoric in general has ossified into a mannered-use of rhetorical figures and “oppressive orthodoxy,”¹¹ and its decline as a central cultural force is “traditionally pinpointed” at the start of the nineteenth century.¹² McCreless’s emphasis falls on rhetoric as a compositional theory and analytical tool; the performance-oriented parts of the classical system (*memoria*, *actio*) are acknowledged but not developed as a framework for understanding musical delivery or audience response. Nor does he treat them as motivating forces in composition itself: the notion that rhetorical composition is conceived from the outset as a means to rhetorical performance, so that the written work is designed to determine, channel, and enable a particular kind of delivery. For this, composer and performer must share a common rhetorical ground in order to bring the musical oration to life.

The Oxford Music Online article “Rhetoric and music” (a collaboration between Blake Wilson, George J. Buelow, and Peter A. Hoyt) similarly presents the Baroque as the high point of a musical-rhetorical “rationalism.”¹³ Buelow stresses that from the seventeenth century, analogies with rhetoric “permeated every level of musical thought,”¹⁴ providing composers with an organized plan of *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio* and *actio*. Buelow presents Johann Mattheson’s *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) as the paradigmatic example. Buelow’s section on the *Affects* defines them explicitly as “rational.” These ‘rationalized emotional states’¹⁵ are objective archetypes to be represented within a piece as a semiotic ‘sign system’ which the listener also intellectually identifies, for the composer “expected the response of his audience to be based on an equally rational insight into the meaning of his music.”¹⁶ Buelow states that these “rationalized affects” were drawn from stable cues documented in taxonomies, which were assumed to be known by composer, performer and listener. This model of baroque affectivity allegedly differs from the subjective “feelings” in what Buelow calls the “Romantic”

¹⁰ Patrick McCreless, “Music and Rhetoric”, in *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 847.

¹¹ McCreless, “Music and Rhetoric”, p. 851.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Blake Wilson, George J. Buelow and Peter A. Hoyt, “Rhetoric and music”, *Grove Music Online* (first published 2001), Accessed 4 November 2025, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043166>.

¹⁴ Buelow, “Rhetoric and music”, *Grove Music Online*, “2. Baroque”.

¹⁵ Ibid., “4. Affects”.

¹⁶ Ibid.

sense.¹⁷ When the article turns to the later eighteenth-century, it again stresses change and decline: affects become individualized and enigmatic; conventionalized affect-figures appear mannered / affected; rhetoric ceases to offer robust compositional models, and theorists are seen as retrofitting oratorical schemes to forms like the *da capo* aria and sonata rather than the other way around.¹⁸ However, the same article also notes that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rhetoric's "main focus" shifted to execution and delivery: elocution manuals proliferate, and performance treatises by C.P.E. Bach, Quantz and Leopold Mozart explicitly urge performers to study orators and "proper declamation."¹⁹ Hoyt here acknowledges the declamatory features in the music of Beethoven. Thus, even in this standard account, rhetoric does not simply disappear around 1800; it is displaced from a comprehensive compositional system into a narrower but persistent concern with performance style and declamatory delivery.

Dietrich Bartel's *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (1997) stands as the systematization of German *musica poetica* in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.²⁰ Bartel characterizes a Lutheran theological and educational background and then assembles an extensive taxonomy of musical-rhetorical figures, linking them to the doctrine of the affections and to specific compositional procedures in German Baroque repertoires. Here, Bartel effectively reinforces a rationalized-affect model as well as rhetoric's "death" in 1800: affects appear as relatively stable, nameable states that can be "set" in music by means of identifiable figures and devices, and the analytical emphasis lies on decoding these semiotic units from the score. Although he is sensitive to historical diversity and warns against over-generalizing individual figures, Bartel's overall orientation is similar to Buelow's account: rhetoric is a quasi-codified sign system embedded in composition. Questions of performance, delivery, and the unpredictability of reception remain largely in the background.

Mark Evan Bonds's *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (1991) shifts attention from figures to form, exploring how eighteenth-century writers conceptualized instrumental music through the metaphor of classical oratory.²¹ He traces the way composers and theorists invoked rhetoric to describe musical grammar, the compositional process, and especially *dispositio*—the ordering of themes and sections in sonata and related forms—showing how music was imagined as a kind of "wordless discourse" capable of moving audiences. Bonds also follows the persistence and gradual transformation of rhetorical imagery into the nineteenth century, where it

¹⁷ Buelow, "Rhetoric and music", *Grove Music Online*, "4. Affects".

¹⁸ Hoyt, "Rhetoric and music", *Grove Music Online*, "III. After 1750".

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Dietrich Bartel, *Musica Poetica: Musical-Rhetorical Figures in German Baroque Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

²¹ Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* (Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

coexists with newer metaphors of organic form. His work thus aligns with the rationalized-affect narrative insofar as music's expressive power is framed in terms of structured discourse, formal logic, and a shared rhetoric of topics and genres, but it also complicates any simple 1800 "cut" by documenting substantial continuity of rhetorical language into later theorizing. The primary focus nonetheless remains on compositional form and critical metaphor rather than on embodied *actio*.

George Barth's *The Pianist as Orator: Beethoven and the Transformation of Keyboard Style* (1992/93) is one of the few major studies to shift the rhetoric–music discussion decisively toward performance. Drawing on late-eighteenth-century German aesthetics and treatises by C.P.E. Bach, Quantz, Mattheson, and Czerny, Barth reconstructs a "speaking style" for Beethoven's keyboard works, focusing on tempo flexibility, articulation, punctuation, and "declamation" as the pianist's analogues to oratorical delivery. His central claim is that a historically and rhetorically informed performance practice transforms Beethoven's keyboard idiom, rescuing it from later notions of metronomic time and legato "lyrical sweep." In this respect, Barth substantially advances the field beyond purely compositional accounts: he treats rhetoric not just as a code for structuring pieces, but as a set of performance ideals that ought to shape how pianists actually play. But Barth's account also treats music as a sign system. While Barth's analyses unpack external features (tempo and articulation as rhetorical inflections), they seldom ask how such inflections feel for players and audiences, or how a player might couple their inner feelings to these external features.

In German musicological literature, a more expansive history of rhetoric is considered. The article by Hartmut Krones in the *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (MGG) on "*Musikalische Rhetorik*" offers perhaps the most expansive "state-of-the-art" synthesis.²² It starts from the premise of music as a form of *Sprache* [language] and argues that, beginning in the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries, rhetorical thinking increasingly provided a ready-made semantic network—figures, symbolically charged patterns, and a shared "*Vokabular*" [vocabulary]—that could be adapted for musical communication. Around 1600–1800 this crystallized into a widely known repertory of musical-rhetorical figures and declamation-like periodic organization of sentences. The article posits that while these features were never fully codified in a single treatise, they were broadly accepted and largely transmitted in the *Zeitgeist*. Johann Nikolaus Forkel's system presented in his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788) is treated as the only truly comprehensive period overview. Forkel distinguished musical "grammar" from "rhetoric," and organizes the latter into five *Hauptteile* [main parts]—periodology, *Schreibarten* [writing styles], genres, aesthetic disposition plus figures, and finally *Vortrag oder Declamation der Tonstücke* [delivery and declamation of a musical work].²³

²² Hartmut Krones, "Musik und Rhetorik", Kategorien der musikalischen Rhetorik, Gesamtsicht, *MGG Online*, ed. Laurenz Lütteken. RILM, Bärenreiter, Metzler, 2016–. Article first published 1997. Article published online 2016. Accessed 4 November 2025. <https://www.mgg-online.com/mgg/stable/533623>.

²³ Krones, "Musik und Rhetorik".

Crucially for any period boundary, the article insists that rhetorical terminology and figure-usage remain naturally assumed in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century writings, and that many elements informed by the period's culture of sensibility continue to be used well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. Later sections marshal evidence from Christian Gottfried Krause, Johann Georg Sulzer, Johann Friedrich Daube, Jan Jakub Ryba, and Ernst Theodor Amadeus (E.T.A.) Hoffmann to show that rhetorical categories (including figures) inform both theoretical discourse and criticism well into the Romantic era.²⁴

Re-thinking the Standard Account

These accounts converge on the idea that rhetoric is integral to eighteenth-century compositional thought, above all in the domain of *inventio*, *dispositio* and the codified “doctrine of affects.” They diverge, however, in how sharply they draw a terminus around 1800. McCreless, Buelow, and Bartel largely reproduce the narrative of an eighteenth-century decline and nineteenth-century “death” of rhetoric as a cosmopolitan cultural system, even though the Oxford Music Online article itself documents the survival of rhetorical training in the nineteenth century as elocution, and Krones's article argues extensively for the continuation and transformation of rhetorical concepts in nineteenth-century theory, criticism and performance practice. At the same time, most of these syntheses are primarily concerned with rhetoric as a compositional and analytical framework, and much less with its implications for musical performance or delivery (*actio*) and audience reception. Buelow and Bartel repeatedly stress compositional craft and “rationalized” affects; only in a late section does the Oxford Music Online article discuss the supposed eighteenth-/nineteenth-century shift toward rhetoric as execution, and even there the focus remains on prescriptive statements about “proper declamation” rather than on embodied delivery, gesture or audience response. Krones's article is exceptional in that it explicitly gives more focus to Forkel's fifth main part: *Vortrag oder Declamation*. Krones's own section on *Deklamation und Vortrag* links musical performance to contemporaneous discussions of gesture and speech-delivery; yet the bulk of the article still treats rhetorical figures, form, and “*Klangrede*” [oration in tones / musical oration] primarily as compositional and text-analytical phenomena, with the role of the performer or audience reception largely inferred and assumed.

Furthermore, these standard texts tend to presuppose a model of “rational affectivity”: in Buelow's formulation, baroque affects are idealized, objectively definable states that can be systematically aroused by appropriate musical “signs,” clearly distinguished from later, “Romantic,” more subjective conceptions of emotion. McCreless likewise foregrounds the rational organization of topics, figures and *dispositio*, and the MGG presents Forkel's system largely as a stable, codifiable network of signs—a purely semiotic system that guarantees the proper and optimal use of Forkel's proposed musical “language of sentiments.” What is rarely problematized is the internal paradox of this

²⁴ Krones, “Musik und Rhetorik”.

notion of “rationalized affects,” and the semiotic bias that underpins it: affects are treated as fixed signifieds attached to musical signifiers, to be decoded by a suitably trained composer, performer, or listener much as the theatre semioticians (and, as Magnus Tessing Schneider has argued, Dene Barnett) imagined eighteenth-century gesture as a vocabulary of signs with pre-agreed meanings.²⁵

From Aristotle onward, however, *pathos* is defined precisely as that which disrupts and reorients judgment: emotions are “feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments” and are always accompanied by pleasure or pain.²⁶ Cicero goes even further, insisting that the orator does not move his audience by offering them an analytical taxonomy of emotions but by subjecting them to a contagious, bodily experience. He famously calls this ‘action’ “the speech of the body” (*est enim actio quasi sermo corporis*),²⁷ and there is a continuity in this idea between writers like John Bulwer in 1644,²⁸ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing in 1767²⁹ and Gilbert Austin in 1806, who gloss this view as the art of “corporeal eloquence.”³⁰ In this view, affect is not a cool object of rational contemplation; it is a holistic, psychosomatic event that “sweeps” speaker and listener alike out of their ordinary composure. This overwhelming, transportive dimension arguably is closely linked to the period’s reception of the Sublime, already theorized in the first-century Greco-Roman rhetorical treatise *Peri hypsous* [*On the Sublime*], attributed to Longinus, and popularized in the seventeenth century through Nicolas Boileau’s influential French translation and re-interpretation, the *Traité du sublime ou du merveilleux dans le discours* (1674). Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century aesthetics then place this experience at the centre of discourse—whether in Moses Mendelssohn’s discussions on the Sublime in poetry, Edmund Burke’s analysis of terror and delight, Hugh Blair’s lectures on the “vehement” sublime, or, later, E.T.A. Hoffmann’s writings on the music of Beethoven—which collectively frame such pathos-laden transports as a defining aim of art itself.³¹

If this ancient anthropology is taken seriously, the idea that listeners in the seventeenth, eighteenth, or nineteenth century experienced musical affects by analytically identifying figures, *topoi*,

²⁵ Magnus Tessing Schneider, “Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century: Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts* ed. Magnus Tessing Schneider (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2023), pp. 81–110.

²⁶ For further reading on Aristotle’s theory of emotion, see Amy M. Schmitter, “17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), ed. N. Zalta, Accessed 4 Nov. 2025. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotions-17th18th/>.

²⁷ See Cicero, *De Oratore. De Fato. Paradoxa Stoicorum. De Partitione Oratoria* Loeb Classical Library 349. Latin text and English trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), Book 3, §222.

²⁸ John Bulwer, *Chirolgia: Or, The Naturall Language of the Hand ... Whereunto Is Added: Chironomia, or, The Art of Manuall Rhetoricke* (London: Printed by Tho. Harper for R. Whitaker, 1644), p. 24.

²⁹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy by G.E. Lessing: A New and Complete Annotated English Translation*, trans. Sara Figal and Wendy Arons, ed. Natalya Baldyga (London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), Essay 3.

³⁰ See the opening chapter of Gilbert Austin, “Of the importance of delivery”, *Chironomia; or, A Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery: Comprehending Many Precepts, Both Ancient and Modern, for the Proper Regulation of the Voice, the Countenance, and Gesture* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1806), p. 1.

³¹ This will be discussed further in Chapter 2.4,

intervals, harmonies, or tonalities appears implausible, and such a notion, arguably, is not supported generally by the primary sources. Technical labels might help theorists and composers describe or plan expressive devices, but they do not explain how *pathos* is actually created in the real-time moment of performance, or how it is experienced in the bodies of the performers or listeners. Furthermore, ancient rhetoric, eighteenth-century aesthetics, and modern psychology converge on the notion that emotions underlie and disturb rational processes rather than simply being the outcome of an intellectual recognition of stylistic markers: they work through the body, through changes in breathing, muscle tension, pulse and attention, and through the sympathetic resonance with another's vocal and gestural display – even when transformed through a musical instrument like a keyboard.

(Post)Modern scholarship, arguably, is often drawn to narratives of epiphanies and rupture—“ages” of sensibility, Romantic “turns,” epistemic “breaks”—and this can foster a bias toward treating new vocabularies as if they indexed a fundamentally new psychology, rather than a shift in how an underlying continuity of experience was conceptualized and discussed. Twenty-first-century human nervous systems are not fundamentally different from those of ancient Athenian jurors, early modern congregations, or nineteenth-century concert audiences.³² Enlightenment-era discourses within the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility certainly offered new conceptual tools for talking about emotion, but they did not suddenly alter the basic embodied experience of joy, fear, grief or exaltation. What changes is the theory of affect, not the human capacity to be shaken, absorbed or “transported” by an impassioned act of delivery. By privileging paradigm shifts and epiphanies, framings like that of the “death of rhetoric” risk mistaking developments in discourse for transformations of the body itself and thereby underestimating the extent to which eighteenth-century sensibility rephrased, rather than reinvented, the ways in which humans have always been moved by eloquent, embodied delivery.

On this view, arguably the standard musicological account of “rationalized affects” can be retained only with strong qualifications. A rational process undoubtedly shapes the invention and arrangement of musical material, and it also plays a role in how performers prepare and reflect on their interpretations. Signs—whether grounded in “natural” resemblance or in convention—function as shared markers that render expression legible to others, even as so-called arbitrary signs draw their meaning from culturally learned codes rather than anything inherent in the sign itself. But to make rational systematization the primary means for understanding rhetorical affectivity is to treat as marginal exactly what Cicero regarded as central: *actio*, the embodied delivery that gives life to the speech (or musical work) and actually moves the audience. It is here, in the messy interaction between a performing body and responsive listeners—subject to all the contingencies of individual sensibilities, moods and contexts—that the neat grids of rational affect-theory begin to fray.

³² For a standard take in the field of paleoanthropology, see Richard G. Klein, *The Human Career: Human Biological and Cultural Origins*, 3rd edition. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 647–78.

This study therefore proposes to rethink the standard musicological interpretation of Forkel's musical-rhetorical "language of sentiments" not as a neutral semiotic system, but in line with this richer, period-specific rhetorical conception of language as rooted in sensibility, the musical voice, and gesture. Assuming a fundamental continuity in the embodied experience of emotions from antiquity through the nineteenth century and into the present, this study foregrounds rhetorical delivery and the performer's "language of sentiments" as key sites where the notion of "rationalized affectivity" is challenged. In so doing, and in line with MGG's evidence for the persistence of rhetorical thinking into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, it will not treat 1800 as a point of decline but will embrace the late-eighteenth-century rhetorical framework as a living resource for guiding interpretation through embodied, affective performance.

As a result, this study presents a novel, performance-centred rhetoric of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century keyboard music, which therefore builds on these compositional and analytical frameworks but refuses to stop at them. This study argues that once *actio* is taken seriously as the most decisive canon, rhetoric cannot be confined to compositional structures and neutral sign systems: it necessarily encompasses *pathos* and embodied delivery, and the contingent ways in which performers' and listeners' bodies resonate with one another. Therefore, this study tries to bridge the gap between compositional theory and real performance practice, presenting the theory alongside applied, artistic case studies, making it also valuable to practitioners in the historical performance field. Moreover, this study takes a more holistic interdisciplinary approach than previous literature, including a study of treatises on historical acting methods and declamation. By first understanding rhetorical strategies in their original form—oratory in practice—then applying the findings analogously back to music, new transdisciplinary insights could be formed that extend beyond what musical sources could yield by themselves.

Other Performance Studies

Other literature has also addressed the importance of *actio* in musical rhetoric. Bruce Haynes's *The End of Early Music* (2007) both reinforces and complicates the standard narrative of "rationalized affect" and an 1800 "break." Haynes explicitly proposes abandoning the term "early music" and instead distinguishing between "Rhetorical" music (pre-1800) and "Romantic/Canonic" music (post-1800). Within this pre-1800 "rhetorical" world, he describes music as fundamentally oriented toward the Affections or Passions, whose main aim is "to evoke and provoke emotions ... that were shared by everyone, audience and performers alike."³³ In this sense, Haynes adopts something close to the rationalized-affect model: affects are generalized states, and pre-1800 music is imagined as operating with a broadly shared affective code that composer, performer, and listener can all access. At the same time, Haynes's emphasis falls less on theorists and taxonomies than on performance style. He contrasts

³³ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, p. 8.

a historical “period style” (speech-like articulation, short gestures, flexible tempo and nuance) with a later “modern style” (homogenized tone, legato, metronomic regularity) and argues that the revival of rhetorical performance entails reintroducing improvisation, extempore embellishment and expressive freedom. In this respect, he moves closer to the performance-centred rhetoric and expressive agency this study advocates. Yet his overarching historical frame still casts rhetoric as essentially dead by 1800. In these ways, Haynes’ work is an important intermediary: it usefully reasserts *actio* and performance style as central to rhetorical music, but it also inherits the same bias toward paradigm change and sharp periodization that this study seeks to question.

Judy Tarling’s *Weapons of Rhetoric* (2004) is a widely used practical handbook that applies the ancient rhetorical canon to Baroque performance. Working from Cicero and Quintilian through seventeenth–eighteenth-century treatises, she maps *inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, and *pronuntiatio* onto concrete musical parameters—articulation, dynamics, tempo, ornamentation, cadences, rhetorical figures—so that Baroque musicians play as orators, using a repertory of expressive devices to move and hold their audiences.³⁴ However, Tarling’s approach still tends toward a semiotic model: rhetoric becomes a relatively stable code, each with an implied affect available to be deployed and decoded. This study diverges here. Where Tarling focuses on cataloguing and applying rhetorical devices mainly in Baroque music, this study foregrounds embodied delivery.

Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric (2007), edited by Tom Beghin, gathers essays that frame Haydn in the classical rhetorical tradition: the premise is that Haydn is the last major composer whose music was regularly discussed in terms drawn from ancient rhetoric, and the contributors largely work “top-down” from Cicero/Quintilian into eighteenth-century reception.³⁵ The volume is invaluable for documenting that rhetorical discourse really did shape contemporary talk about Haydn, and for insisting that performance is part of that story. But much of the rhetoric here is still treated as a conceptual vocabulary or code—topics, figures, decorum—rather than as a fully theorized account of embodied delivery. The focus tends to stay with how ancient categories illuminate Haydn’s works and reception, less with how eighteenth-century acting and declamation practices might have structured the bodily delivery of those works. Next, Beghin’s *The Virtual Haydn: Paradox of a Twenty-First-Century Keyboardist* (2015) goes further toward performance: Beghin stages Haydn’s keyboard music on different period instruments and in reconstructed spaces, narrating his HIP choices through eighteenth-century aesthetics and rhetorical metaphors.³⁶ Yet even here, rhetoric often functions as a set of analogies, rather than as a sustained engagement with late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century sentimental acting and declamation manuals and the psychosomatic mechanics of gesture,

³⁴ Judy Tarling, *The Weapons of Rhetoric: A Guide for Musicians and Audiences* (St. Albert: Corda Music Publications, 2004).

³⁵ Tom Beghin and Sander M. Goldberg, eds. *Haydn and the Performance of Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

³⁶ Tom Beghin, *The Virtual Haydn: Paradox of a Twenty-First-Century Keyboardist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

voice, and pathos. This study aligns with Beghin in treating rhetoric as fundamentally a performance problem, but it differs in emphasis and sources. Instead of moving primarily from ancient rhetoric down to Haydn, it situates rhetoric in its eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century context, bringing in elocutionary and theatrical acting treatises, the aesthetics of sensibility, and getting closer to *actio* as understood by Haydn's and Beethoven's contemporaries. Where Beghin's projects remain partly anchored in a classical rhetoric of figures and topics, this study considers these same elements in the context of rhetorical delivery—linking musical rhetoric not just to what performers know about ancient oratory, but to what their bodies do in front of listeners.

Maria Bania's *Becoming Beethoven* (2023) is a major reference point for this study. She explores early Romantic French and German aesthetics explicitly from the performer's perspective, showing how performances were imagined as creating a synthesis between “real and ideal,” material and spiritual, and between performers, listeners, composers, sounding music and instruments.³⁷ Her work models exactly the kind of exploration adopted in this study: she treats historical discourse not as a set of abstract ideas, but as a toolbox for re-enacting early Romantic “mindsets” in contemporary performance. This study builds directly on this, extending her concern with affective strategies and performer–listener “sympathy” into a more explicitly rhetorical and *actio*-centred framework, and pushing the focus slightly earlier to the late eighteenth century as well.

Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body (European Drama and Performance Studies 19, 2022) is a collection of essays edited by Jed Wentz. It likewise provides a crucial bridge between historical theory and modern practice.³⁸ The volume gathers specialists from several disciplines to explore early modern acting through practice-based research—Aaron Hill, different declamatory styles, historical acting viewed through Alexander Technique, and more—always asking how these techniques can live in twenty-first-century bodies. This study is very much in conversation with this approach: adopting the same assumption that historical acting systems are practical strategies for expression that can inform how musicians move and play today. Where Wentz's volume ranges broadly across theatre and performance, this study uses spoken declamation as a means to enhance musical *actio*, applying these historical acting insights systematically to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century musical delivery.

Finally, *Performing the Eighteenth Century: Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts* (2023), edited by Magnus Tessing Schneider and Meike Wagner, offers a rich methodological

³⁷ Maria Bania, *Becoming Beethoven: Re-enacting Aesthetic Ideas and Mindsets from an Early Romantic Discourse of Musical Performance* (Gothenburg: Göteborgs Universitet, 2023).

³⁸ Jed Wentz (ed.), *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, European Drama and Performance Studies 19 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2022).

template.³⁹ Framed as a dialogue between theatre scholars and artists, it asks what contemporary practitioners can do with eighteenth-century theatrical knowledge, from materiality of costume and light to projects like “Rousseau’s *Pygmalion* as research on stage.” This insistence on practice-led research in historical spaces, and on oscillating between theory and rehearsal room, is foundational for this study. It takes up their challenge within a music-centred context: using their models of historically informed “doing” to structure experiments in musical rhetoric and delivery, and to test how eighteenth-century ideas about gesture, pathos, and sensibility can shape modern performances of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century repertoire today.

Methodology

This study seeks to address both the theoretical and practical, taking first and foremost a scholarly approach supplemented by artistic research. These two dimensions are separated within the overall structure of the study. The bulk of this study includes synthesizing instructions provided in such primary sources as treatises on elocution, acting, declamation, and artistic aesthetics, comparing them to analogous primary sources on music, and finally, constructing a workable framework from them. In the final sections, this is applied to the creation of new musical interpretations. Here, as an artist professionally performing on the fortepiano and harpsichord, the author will learn to act in the style of the period, documenting the process, and transfer those insights into musical practice.

What benefits might such an approach to musicological research and performance studies have? Not only will it arguably provide the musicological field with a more complete understanding of the musical aesthetics of this period, but it could provide historically informed performers with improved tools for rendering historical works more faithfully to their original conception (if that is their intention). This rhetorical paradigm can bring vitality back to past works, making them accessible once more to modern audiences via the expression of human *pathos* through both the voice and body — transmitted into instrumental playing. Rhetoric, in this sense, becomes a link between musicological theory and musical practice. While the scholarly outcomes can be achieved through rigorous academic methods, the artistic product can only be evaluated subjectively. Regardless, the utility of these unified goals will be self-evident both for musicologists looking for new historical insights, and performers seeking transformative approaches.

Periodization

The study focuses on the period 1740–1830. While rhetorical influence on music certainly permeated the whole early modern period and beyond, this era marks a unique convergence of the aesthetics of sentimentalism and the emergence of early Romanticism, offering a coherent intellectual trajectory. The era is also well-documented compared to earlier epochs, with a plethora of Enlightenment philosophical

³⁹ Magnus Tessing Schneider and Meike Wagner, eds. *Performing the Eighteenth Century: Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2023).

treatises, pedagogical manuals, and aesthetics writings that delve into rhetorical theory and practice. Some pedagogical manuals even explicitly highlight musical features in declamation and gesture with detailed notational systems. Moreover, this timeframe was one of social change and growing internationalization—the cross-border flow of artists, ideas, and cosmopolitan values across Europe shaped a shared cultural idiom in speech, music, and aesthetics. Despite its significance, this period remains underrepresented in rhetorical performance-practice scholarship, which tends to focus on the Baroque. From the composer-performers of the Bach family through Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert, this period saw the rise of the pianoforte as an instrument ideally suited to personal expression in an era where the curiosity of the Enlightenment merged with the imaginative realm of the Romantic. For the author, this convergence of philosophical, instrumental, aesthetic, and cultural transformation—founded in classical rhetorical traditions yet invigorated by Enlightenment empiricism and cosmopolitan exchange—offers a compelling and fertile ground for scholarly and artistic investigation.

Historically Informed Approach

This study works with a historically informed performance (HIP) approach. Generally, HIP is a discipline dedicated to understanding and performing historical music in a manner faithful to the aesthetic, stylistic, and expressive intentions of its time. While not uniform in its application, the HIP or “early music” approach is fundamentally source-based and related to the concept of “authenticity.” According to John Butt in Oxford Music Online, “authenticity” in musical performance has often been interpreted to contain some combination of the following elements:

use of instruments from the composer’s own era; use of performing techniques documented in the composer’s era; performance based on the implications of the original sources for a particular work; fidelity to the composer’s intentions for performance or to the type of performance a composer desired or achieved; an attempt to re-create the context of the original performance; and an attempt to re-create the musical experience of the original audience.⁴⁰

Scholars like Joseph Kerman and Richard Taruskin have criticized aspects of HIP, while others like Bruce Haynes and John Butt have championed it; however, this study will not serve as a justification for HIP, or even a vindication. This study assumes the HIP approach as the most appropriate for presenting works from the period 1740–1830. The methodologies employed here treat HIP as a source-led, historically oriented approach that privileges period evidence and contexts, while acknowledging the twentieth-century debates that shaped HIP’s self-understanding. It seeks to avoid post-modern eclecticism by prioritizing the historical context of musical works and their performance. The success of such a model would vindicate French archaeologist Quatremère de Quincy, who argued in 1815 that

⁴⁰ John Butt, “Authenticity”, *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.
<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000046587>.

the removal of works from their original political, religious, and moral purposes would lead to an art “without purpose,” conceived “without passion, executed without warmth, and viewed without interest.”⁴¹ However, within this context, because the framework is ultimately oriented towards modern performers, this study attempts to link relevance to the present by introducing the idea of a “historically inspired approach:” more details on this to follow below.

Consequently, in order to be faithful to interpreting historical sources, musical and rhetorical analytical methods of the period (e.g. partimento theory, thoroughbass, rhetorical structural analysis, etc.) will be prioritized over those anachronistic to the period (e.g. Schenkerian analysis, Riemannian analysis, Hanslick’s absolute music aesthetics etc.). This will also apply to the rhetorical methods for verbal language. The poems and their delivery will be interpreted within eighteenth-century intellectual and aesthetic frameworks; post-modern “death of the author” approaches will be eschewed. Poetry recitation will be governed by period rhetorical methods and aesthetic ideals rather than Stanislavskian or Brechtian strategies. These strategies will be employed with full awareness that modern tastes and sensibilities cannot be subtracted; nevertheless, historical principles will be used as the base. If, historically, music was analogous to poetry, this would certainly mean poetry of the time conceived within frameworks of the time, rather than hitherto unknown frameworks from the future.

Nevertheless, this study seeks to counter some criticisms of HIP. While this source-based approach provides valuable insights into historical contexts, it inevitably confronts limitations: sources often offer incomplete information, can be silent on some interpretive details, and may inadvertently constrain performers into overly prescriptive or literal readings. The American musicologist Laurence Dreyfus criticized conventions within the HIP approach for cultivating, as he described it, a “mythical kingdom of the past;”⁴² a post-modern objectivist fantasy far-removed from the actual period, because important original elements were not given consideration. Dreyfus noticed an ideological bias in the early music community, which often focused on material elements like period instruments, or technical stylistic practices. For Dreyfus, key “empirical” considerations like “emotional expression or the meaning of the work” were ignored, and tendencies to “relegate questions of aesthetic value and critique to a secondary, if not meaningless, status” often formed “under the guise of furthering rigorous scholarship.”⁴³ The correct application of objective, stylistic “rules” leads to an incomplete notion of “period style,” and performances conceived around such a model can arguably become emotionally-detached and coldly logocentric. However, sentimental rhetoric, with its frameworks for emotional

⁴¹ Tout ouvrage sans objet se conçoit sans passion, s’exécute sans chaleur, et se voit sans intérêt. Quatremère de Quincy, *Considérations morales sur la destination des ouvrages de l’art* (Paris: Crapelet, 1815), p. 32.

⁴² Magnus Tessing Schneider, “Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, p. 97.

⁴³ For the full argument, see Laurence Dreyfus, “Early Music Defended against Its Devotees: A Theory of Historical Performance in the Twentieth Century”, *The Musical Quarterly*, 69/3 (1983), pp. 297–322. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/742175>. Accessed 5 Dec. 2025.

expression and aesthetic evaluation, could provide a unifying fabric that will fill in some of these missing links which previous HIP researchers have shifted to a secondary status. Hence, this study will seek to course-correct some of the shortcomings of HIP. By examining interdisciplinary elements and engaging with them not only in a scholarly musicological context, but experimentally via artistic research, the goal of this study is to show how the sensibility of a performer, their individual sensation of the various human emotions, and the way this negotiates with the experience of the audience can govern all other aspects of a rhetorical performance.

Historical sources may illuminate stylistic practices, but within a rhetorical mindset, these characteristics should arguably be in service of a rhetorical purpose or *telos*. Arguably, style in this sense is not an end in itself, but a means. It is a vocabulary whose value lies in what it makes communicable: namely ideas and emotions and the production of an effect in the listener (i.e. listeners are emotionally moved). While historical treatises often reveal that devices—portamenti in string playing, rhythmic modifications, tempo rubato—were once frequent, to apply them indiscriminately, or merely to flout modern conventions, severs intention from effect. To treat period practices as abstract forms—added simply because they are “historical” or because they signal authenticity now—risks turning performance into something that may be intellectual or even impressive, but communicatively inert. As this study will argue, stylistic devices acquire meaning best when they are bound to an affective purpose. Consequently, this study’s rhetorical framework does not merely accommodate historical devices; it governs them by asking, at every turn, what they mean and do. In doing so, the HIP performer gains an expressive agency. Rather than beginning with a catalogue of “HIP effects” and searching for places to apply them, the proposed rhetorical performer begins with the work’s communicative aim and selects—then calibrates—stylistic means in proportion to the intended effect, so that authenticity is not located in the surface presence of stylistic devices, but in the intelligibility of their rhetorical function and the aesthetic experience they convey.

These stylistic devices attest to a broader rhetorical vocabulary available to earlier performers. Rather than fixed prescriptions, they operated as strategies that conferred agency—giving the player a voice with which to share inner subjective feelings with a wider world, rendering these feelings communicable, intersubjective, and legible to others. Rhetoric organized choice, so that the performer’s intuitive flexibility served argument and affect. This contrasts with modern regimes of standardization and text-literalism, where dogmatic norms tend to flatten individual inflection in the name of uniformity. These will be examined in Chapter 4.4.2. In the eighteenth-century sense, “taste”—examined in Chapter 5.4—governed this agency, calibrating invention to context so expression remained communicable, effective, and proportionate to the situation. For example, if a performer playing angry music cannot connect an inner feeling of anger to an outer expression of it, the audience likely will scarcely realize the performer expressed it. If they succeed in making anger outwardly legible, its degree matters. An audience will be frightened by sublime fury—or they might laugh if the

intensity of anger performed is not appropriate to the situation. The performer does not only need a supply of inward feeling to express, but a sense of how to appropriately express it in a manner fit for the occasion. Only then will the lofty goals of the rhetorician be achievable.

Lastly, HIP may encompass a wide array of practices and philosophies, often leading to disagreement about the degree of engagement with sources. Some performers maintain that the spirit of the style can be captured on a modern Steinway grand, while others insist on recreating the entire eighteenth-century ambiance, down to candlelight and clothing. This study proposes then a pragmatic alternative: defining a *minimum viable product* for historically inspired performance. It acknowledges the importance of period instruments, and stylistic technical conventions, as these are the “brushes” and “palettes” available to the performer. However, the study emphasizes the importance of incorporating rhetorical expressivity and aesthetic criteria from the specific period to govern the brushstrokes, rather than relying solely on intuition (as many performers do), and providing structured pathways for tasteful creativity. If, as many late eighteenth-century sources claim, music was a language of the sentiments, then rhetorical delivery—both in sound and gesture—should arguably be recognized as a core component of HIP if fidelity to the past is the goal.

Historically Inspired Performance

Despite all of the efforts of HIP, true “authenticity” remains an elusive, indeed unattainable goal—short of time travel. Following an eighteenth-century recipe may result in a delicious cake, but not a perfectly “authentic” eighteenth-century one. While modern ingredients may resemble their historical counterparts, they have been altered by centuries of agricultural selection—today’s fruits, for instance, are often larger and sweeter. Moreover, historical recipes (like those in Hannah Glasse’s *The Art of Cookery Made Plain and Easy* c. 1777) tend to be vague in their measurements and assume a degree of instinct, experience, and interpretation from the cook. Though human physiology remains largely unchanged from that of eighteenth-century individuals, twenty-first-century tastes and preferences are shaped by the cultural and culinary norms of our own time. Nevertheless, individuals of the twenty-first century continue to share many emotional and psychological commonalities with those in the past, which allows us to find resonance and meaning in their culinary—and artistic—expressions.

While it is impossible to know exactly how artistic practices unfolded in the past, this study introduces the concept of a historically inspired approach. This term does not suggest the invention of spurious or “inspired” evidence but rather emphasizes that the engagement with historical sources—and the attempt to reconstruct their expressive strategies—is valuable and relevant for modern practice. The eighteenth-century cookbook, followed faithfully, may yet yield a delicious modern cake, regardless of whether it is truly verifiably authentic. Rather than aiming for an unattainable replication of the past, this approach seeks to inform present-day musicological understanding and artistic practice through historically grounded knowledge. In the artistic domain, it fosters interpretations that are

faithful to the conceptual and expressive frameworks of the past, without claiming absolute authenticity. In this model, the historically inspired performer does not strive to become a copy of the past. Instead, the performer draws upon rhetorical strategies and holistic concepts from eighteenth-century culture to cultivate their own agency as an artist: imaginative freedom, individual expression, and embodied emotional engagement. This not only creates space for personally authentic expressivity but also invites the audience to reconsider interpretation as a transformative and communicative act. Thus, the past is not treated as a static or idealized model, nor as a “mythical kingdom” to be restored, but as a source of inspiration. This study shifts the focus toward understanding the underlying aesthetic and expressive principles of historical performance, such that rhetoric becomes both a conceptual framework and a practical tool—allowing performers to channel their individual expressive agency systematically and artfully within the expressive language of the past. Again, it serves as a bridge between historical understanding and contemporary artistic creativity.

Holistic Interdisciplinary Approach

To grasp a broader understanding of musical expression during 1740–1830, this study will take an interdisciplinary approach—one that includes not only music theory and historical performance practice, but also literary studies, acting theory, philosophy, aesthetic psychology, and the broader humanistic ideals of the period. Rhetoric lies at the intersection of these disciplines, as its influence extended beyond verbal discourse, informing models of human behaviour, cognition, affective response—and in some respects, how to “hack” these. Eighteenth-century artists were not trained in isolation from these currents; rather, their aesthetic evaluations, modes of expression, and artistic instincts were cultivated within a shared intellectual environment. From Cicero’s vision of the *orator perfectus* to Johann Mattheson’s 1739 portrayal of *der vollkommene Capellmeister*, the model artist was expected to be a well-rounded individual, versed not only in technique but also in the broader domains of learning and the humanities.⁴⁴

As Johann Mattheson, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Hugh Blair, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Gilbert Austin, Ludwig van Beethoven, and many of their contemporaries attested, true artistry required more than technical command—it demanded sensitivity to expressivity, which could only be achieved through experience, education, and cultivated taste. To rise above the level of mere craftsmanship, the musical orator had to be capable of meaningful expression. In the period, this often-meant heightened sensibility: an acute susceptibility to emotion. Such sensitivity, according to Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783), was trained via cultivating taste in the fine arts: *catharsis* that “increased sensibility to all the tender and humane passions, by giving them frequent

⁴⁴ Johann Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (Hamburg: Christian Herold, 1739), Part II, ch. 2, §4; trans. ed. Ernest C Harriss, *Johann Mattheson's Der vollkommene Capellmeister: a revised translation with critical commentary* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), p. 127.

exercise.”⁴⁵ For Blair, this broader rhetorical and humanistic study “leads us to reflect on the operations of the imagination, and the movements of the heart; and increase our acquaintance with the most fine feelings which belong to our frame.”⁴⁶ Therefore, for Blair, the cathartic process of exercising *pathos* in the fine arts expands the understanding, elucidating the nature of the emotions expressed, and makes the individual sensitive to moral virtue.

Inspired by these ideals, this study’s interdisciplinary approach views musical performance as the sum of many interconnected disciplines. Classical rhetoric always enjoyed a fruitful exchange with not only music, but the visual arts, and poetics. According to Wentz, “actors and artists enjoyed something of a symbiotic relationship in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and drawings, prints, paintings and statues form important sources for reconstruction today.”⁴⁷ Furthermore, artistic movements which characterized the period 1740–1830, including the rococo, British and German sentimentalism (*Empfindsamkeit*), French neo-classicism, *Sturm und Drang*, and the rise of Romanticism will be examined holistically. Their underlying principles applied to a wide range of artistic disciplines including music, and their manifestations in other arts will bring musical contexts into view with greater lucidity. For example, similar underlying rococo principles of playful lightness and grace guide the design of a Louis XV-style chair, an Anacreontic poem, princely “Arcadian” garden retreats like those in Schwetzingen, and a sonata in the galant style. Likewise, similar parallels may be drawn for Romantic poetry, stylized ruins edifices, the English landscape garden, and a Beethoven sonata. Furthermore, although HIP is often associated with materiality—period instruments and the stylistic techniques involved with playing them—this study argues that such material and mechanical elements are only one facet of musical expression. In the aesthetics of the period, music is also about ideas and how they are conveyed to others; as such, the study’s interdisciplinary scope extends to Enlightenment aesthetic psychology.

Historical Ambivalences

The period 1740–1830 was marked by seeming ambivalences, paradoxes, and both aesthetic and social tensions. A central one mirrors the contest between Phoebus and Pan in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: culture vs. nature, permeated discourse, and adds ambiguity in the field of artistic aesthetics. As Paul Mattick Jr. observed in his study of eighteenth-century aesthetics, “if nature is that which is given, at least for the temporal span relevant to human experience, culture is that which is constructed, and so maintained, destroyed, or reconstructed by human action in time.”⁴⁸ Rhetoric as a framework—situated between the natural and the artificial, invention and imitation—reflects many of the dichotomies that animated contemporary debates. The age wrestled with the competing ideals of art versus nature, that are reflected

⁴⁵ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 16.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Wentz, “Introduction. ‘I was just saying the lines.’”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ Paul Mattick Jr., “Introduction.” *Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics and the Reconstruction of Art*, ed. Paul Mattick Jr. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 1.

in related domains: the progress of the city (civilization) vs. the purity of nature (the pastoral), cultivated taste versus untrained instinct, and study versus innate genius. These oppositions permeated central cultural debates: German discourse contrasting the tastes of the *Kenner und Liebhaber* (the learned connoisseur vs. the amateur with instinctual sensibility), the divergent receptions of J.S. Bach's complex counterpoint versus the emerging galant style, Christoph Willibald Gluck's and Jean-Georges Noverre's reforms to opera and ballet respectively, and the rise of *Sturm und Drang* aesthetics and later Romanticism with its shift toward the individual. These tensions mirrored broader societal transformations leading up to the French Revolution, reflecting anxieties around class, education, cosmopolitanism, and the very role of the arts in public life. For the rhetorical framework, these tensions are relevant, as they lie at the heart of many questions within the aesthetic evaluation inherent to the creative process: prescription vs. intuition, affectation versus personal emotional authenticity, imitation vs. inspiration, and even rational control (sense) vs. submission to the emotions (sensibility).

Rather than attempting to resolve these paradoxes, this study embraces them as part of the period's rich dialectic—a balance rather than a contradiction. The aesthetic maxims of the time, such as “Art is Nature improved” and C.P.E. Bach's writing *für Kenner und Liebhaber*, encapsulate this duality: an art that seeks to elevate nature while remaining founded in it; a music that speaks to both the intellectually refined and the passionate. Such concessions may be necessary to the performer, who needs practical solutions. The question for the performer—who becomes a practitioner of eighteenth-century thought—becomes that of balance and degrees on a case-by-case basis. This balancing act, between intellectual design and emotional immediacy, is at the heart of rhetorical history and importantly, eighteenth-century “sentimental” rhetoric—and remains, for modern interpreters, a productive tension that will help them make aesthetic evaluations in their own practice.

Geographic Distinctions

The ancient sources on classical rhetoric, including works by Aristotle, Quintilian, Cicero, and Longinus, were a foundational base for early modern Western culture from their re-discovery in the Renaissance. Circulated first in Latin and Greek, and eventually translated into local vernacular, they formed the basis for a new wave of rhetorical study in the seventeenth century, which all claimed to trace its roots back to this body of classical wisdom.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, rhetorical reception differed within different national schools that emerged in the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, it is difficult from the vantage point of the twenty-first century to discern all the differences with the documented sources available when trying to create a framework that could inform a practice. Given the common root in antiquity, this study prioritizes posing a “cosmopolitan” rhetorical approach at the risk of amalgamating certain practices within different national schools. Regardless, to keep the scope precise, this study concentrates mostly on German keyboard repertories from 1740–1830—a milieu that exerted outsized

⁴⁹ Thomas Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 206.

influence on European practice. While the analytic framework may be adaptable to French and Italian traditions, the argument is deliberately grounded in German- and English-language sources (scores, treatises, and pedagogical writings) and in instruments central to the Anglo-German sphere (harpsichord, Viennese and English fortepianos), so as to calibrate claims to a robust evidentiary base. Given differences in national schools, this focus tries to limit the risk of overgeneralizing.

In this period, German culture was slowly developing a unique intellectual identity, whilst deeply influenced by both English and French Enlightenment ideas. British theories on sentimentalism had a wide reception in German lands and spurred *Empfindsamkeit*, *Sturm und Drang*, Romanticism, and the cult of the sublime.⁵⁰ Likewise, this intellectual exchange went both ways. English and French ideas flowed into Germany, trading it for music. The rise of international publication of music in the eighteenth-century led to the widespread dissemination of German music alongside its increased popularity in England and France. English and French taste for instrumental music became increasingly dominated by German influences. With the popularity of the works of the Mannheim school in Paris during the 1750–70s, to the ascendancy of German immigrants like George Frederic Handel and the cosmopolitan appeal of Johann Christian Bach, by 1800 and onwards, the concert halls of London and Paris were dominated by the music of superstars like Joseph Haydn and Ludwig van Beethoven.

The economic dominance and rise of the middle classes of Great Britain in the late eighteenth century led to the rise of the English elocution movement. For the first time, a rising class of literate bourgeois readers became interested in rhetorical education, as it was associated with upward social mobility. No longer was rhetorical training exclusive to the aristocracy, and there was an explosion in publication of English manuals on rhetorical speaking by various “elocutionists” whose project was to reform and sentimentalize the oratory of the British populace to address the needs of democratic reforms. While further research could narrow down specific national characteristics in declamation, this study will draw ideas from both sides. Some of these manuals would find their way to Germany in translation during the “Age of Goethe,” and this transference increased during the Biedermeier period.⁵¹ This unique social and cultural moment in the history of rhetoric led to the production of such manuals, and it is important to acknowledge that these manuals form an invaluable source for reconstructing the practices of historical oratory. Therefore, this study will rely on these sources heavily, while recognizing that they may reflect a bias towards a specifically English oratorical approach. However, the accuracy of their instructions cannot be ignored, and such detailed sources scarcely exist for other languages. Despite the English bias which they may include, the general principles put forward in these manuals,

⁵⁰ Keith Chapin, “C. P. E. Bach and the Neoclassical Sublime: Revisions of a Concept”, *Music and the Sonorous Sublime in European Culture, 1680–1880*, ed. Sarah Hibberd and Miranda Stanyon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 95.

⁵¹ See Mary Helen Dupree, “From »Dark Singing« to a Science of the Voice: Gustav Anton von Seckendorff and the Declamatory Concert Around 1800”, *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 86 (2012), pp. 366–395.

being inspired by the ancient sources themselves, have much universal applicability to languages other than English, and can certainly inform modern readers and musicians about the practices of eighteenth-century rhetoric.

The usefulness of such declamatory sources therefore depends not only on their historical specificity, but also on their claim to articulate principles possessing a certain degree of universality. Although the outward realization of rhetorical delivery necessarily varies according to language, national character, and social convention, many elocutionists understood their rules as adaptations of more fundamental principles inherited from the ancient rhetorical canon. H. A. Kerndörffer makes this distinction explicit in the preface to his *Handbuch der Declamation* (1813), grounding his claim in practical experience with speakers of different European languages:

Extensive experience, and in particular the varied interactions with educated foreigners in the context of teaching, and the resulting familiarity with the distinctive spirit of each language, have given the author the gratifying conviction that the rules set out here for correct oral delivery – with particular regard to the characteristic and national features of each language – are sound and applicable in all cases and for every language.⁵²

Kerndörffer does not deny the particular “spirit” or national character of individual languages; rather, he argues that general principles of effective delivery can be adapted to their distinctive qualities. This provides a model for the present study. The declamatory principles derived from English and German sources are not treated as prescribing an identical external style across national traditions, but as identifying transferable relationships between thought, sentiment, vocal inflection, register, bodily gesture, and rhetorical effect. If music was itself repeatedly conceived during the period as a “language of sentiments,” then perhaps these principles may likewise be adapted beyond verbal language to musical performance.

Artistic Research

This study, in addition to its theoretical discourse on the rhetorical framework, presents an application of these principles via an artistic research approach, mostly centred around Part III of the dissertation. Recognizing that rhetoric was once considered a “discipline” will undoubtedly bring numerous benefits to understand the artistic process of an era that places such emphasis on “individual” psychosomatic experiences, such as the nature of “genius,” “feeling,” “sentiment,” “sensitivity,” and “taste.” The premise of the study is therefore twofold. On the musicological end, it reconstructs a rhetorical

⁵² “Eine längere Erfahrung und namentlich der vielfältige dem Unterrichte gewidmete Umgang mit gebildeten Ausländern, und die daraus hervorgehende Bekanntschaft mit dem besondern Geiste der jedesmaligen Sprache schenken dem Verfasser die angenehme Ueberzeugung, daß die hier aufgestellten Regeln des richtigen mündlichen Vortrags, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Charakteristischen und Nationellen jeder Sprache, für alle Fälle und für jede Sprache haltbar und anwendbar sind.” H. A. Kerndörffer, *Handbuch der Declamation: Ein Leitfaden für Schulen und für den Selbstunterricht zur Bildung eines guten, rednerischen Vortrags*, Erster Theil (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer dem Jüngern, 1813), p. v.

framework: what late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers say about expression, delivery, natural signs improved by art, and the training of judgement. On the other, as artistic research, it tests what those ideas do when they are taken seriously as operating principles in performance.

Practice-led research has gained prominence in disciplines such as theatre studies and archaeology precisely because it treats embodied, experiential work as a mode of inquiry capable of generating knowledge that is otherwise difficult to access. In historically oriented performance research, this matters because many of the most consequential claims in the sources are not merely descriptive; they are normative, procedural, and pedagogical. They often concern how something should be done, what counts as “natural,” how art refines nature without becoming artificial, and how taste intervenes. Accordingly, this study begins musicological, with a rigorous scholarly base by establishing a theoretical framework through a source-led approach: mapping historical vocabularies, reconstructing frameworks of rhetoric and aesthetics, and situating treatises and practices within their cultural contexts. From this foundation, the study follows a practice-led trajectory explored by the author, in which the historical materials are treated as prompts for action, evaluated through performance work. This does not imply that artistic creation in practice supplies a critical “proof” that overrides history; rather, it provides a testing ground where historical prescriptions and ideals can be confronted with the practical problems they were designed to solve. In the end, the demonstrable impact of its products can only be evaluated aesthetically.

What would practice-led research entail? This approach puts forth the mind and body of the individual artist as an object of study. In my own personal case, as a professional soloist on harpsichord and fortepiano, these explorations carried out as part of this study directly interact with my own artistic practice as a performer. While my engagement with the material is individual and consequently subjective in its application, reflections on my experience using the proposed techniques in real performance scenarios will be invaluable to other HIP musician readers, and scholars. While the internal experience of the artist has long been ignored in performance studies, integrating it into HIP research will help course-correct some of the aforementioned shortcomings it has endorsed, like the prioritization of mechanical rules and objectivity over more subjective aesthetic values.

At the same time, the study is attentive to a familiar set of reservations within academic contexts about artistic research: concerns about methodological transparency, the risk of substituting experiential testimony for argument, and the difficulty of evaluating practice-based claims by shared scholarly criteria. For that reason, the dissertation keeps its components deliberately legible and separable. The main musicological argument, being the framework and rhetorical approach itself, is made in its own right, with historical sources and critical reasoning carrying the burden of proof; the artistic research does not function as the evidentiary foundation for those claims. In this sense, the last parts of Part II and Part III operate as an additional mode of illustration that renders the framework more tangible by

showing how it might be inhabited in practice, and what sorts of products it may produce, which arguably have artistic and aesthetic value in themselves.

This structure entails a corresponding shift in writing tone. Artistic research will thus be indicated by a change to the first-person voice. Such a change acknowledges the epistemic conditions of artistic work: subjectivity is not a contaminant to be concealed, but a parameter made visible. Moments of artistic interpretation and artistic reflection—where experiential knowledge, tacit judgement, and embodied experimentation are central—are therefore signposted. Here, the “I” functions as methodological transparency. This becomes particularly important when a seemingly neutral interpretation of sources is informed by claims that are necessarily coloured by a personal artistic training, habits of listening, and experiential practice. Secondly, sometimes the line between a distanced scholarly interpretation and an experience-inflected reading can blur—often in the kinds of assertions that sound most objective on the surface. In these places, the first person again operates as a signpost: it tells the reader that what follows is not merely a report of what the sources say, but an interpretation also shaped by personal experience as an artist.

Within the artistic research sections of this study, the focus will be on a straightforward *doing* and *application* in the preparation and moment of performance. Classical rhetoric was first and foremost a *practical discipline*: speeches were declaimed, poems were recited, and theatrical roles were acted, all with the awareness of rhetorical principles. This will mean, as Wentz has put it, avoiding “the virtuosic Post-Modern scholarly juggling act (so valued in academia currently) in favour of a sincere and structured *doing*.”⁵³ Wentz underscores this point whilst advocating a practice-led historically informed acting approach. While many considerations go into the preparation of a performance, in the immediacy of real-time performance, these all in some measure dissolve, and the performer often relies on their instinct, training, and reflex. Philosophers have described this tension as the “frame problem,” referring to the difficulty of deciding which information is relevant in the moment of action.⁵⁴ In performance, this highlights the necessity of internalizing knowledge so that choices can emerge responsively without conscious deliberation over every consideration—a practical consideration of the real-time immediacy demanded from them. What matters is delivering lines, sensing how in the moment how a performer says them, feeling emotion move through the body, and shifting toward the next required affect. Hence, in this “frame,” performers do not need the scholarly frameworks valued in academic writing. In this study, however, artistic research aims to bridge these worlds. It proposes a model that encourages performer-scholars to balance theory and practice by preparing and internalizing a framework, allowing them to test ideas through experiment in performance.⁵⁵ Thus, this study will

⁵³ Wentz, “Introduction. ‘I was just saying the lines.’”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 20.

⁵⁴ See Murray Shanahan, “The Frame Problem”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2016 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/entries/frame-problem>.

⁵⁵ Wentz, “Introduction. ‘I was just saying the lines.’”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 20.

follow from this model, merging these two different modes of inquiry into one study. The practice-led research of this study will thus be “applied musicology:” much like how engineering applies theoretical concepts within mathematics, physics, chemistry, and computing science to build practical and useful “real-world” results.

It is for these reasons that prioritizing a practical rhetorical approach is given over certain “epistemological epiphanies” related to geographical or national differences. The period of question, between 1740–1830, has also been narrowed to minimize the inaccuracies which may result from this prioritization. While certain intellectual frameworks evolved throughout this period, various concepts such as sentiment and sensibility enjoyed a sense of relative continuity throughout the period. Regardless, changes in style certainly occurred. Although the prioritization of a practical approach may flatten certain finesses that come from changing intellectual frameworks both geographically and temporally, the benefits which arise from the success of the approach addressing the issues of objectivity and inexpressivity within the current musical practice. Further research could refine these rhetorical stylistic nuances once a general practice has been established.

The question remains however: how does a researcher test the validity, or aesthetic effectiveness of a rhetorical approach? How can the researcher scientifically measure if an audience is emotionally “moved?” As mentioned above, this study will only test these hypotheses subjectively. I can evaluate what I did and if I thought it was good, but I cannot prove through my own appraisal whether or not the methods employed are universally effective on an audience. While disciplines like psychology and neuroscience might be able to reliably answer questions about the measurable real-world effects such performances may have on the minds and bodies of listeners, a study of this type is beyond the scope of the present study. In other words, while I can evaluate the success of my artistic outputs via my own taste, sensibility, and aesthetic evaluation, measuring its effect on others is methodologically complex. In order to determine what empirical effects this approach has on audiences, further interdisciplinary research is required.

Structure of the Study

The study is organized in three parts—framework, application, and artistic-research case studies. Throughout, the term “rhetorical performer” designates a performer who adopts the perspective developed in the historically grounded framework. This usage is intended both to clarify how an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century musician might have reasoned and acted within those assumptions, and also to offer practical prompts for present-day performers engaging with this study’s vision of HIP. Hence, throughout this structure, the study conceives HIP in two distinct but complementary ways. In Parts I and II, HIP is approached primarily as an object of critical, theoretical, and philosophical inquiry: that is, as a contemporary cultural and musicological phenomenon whose assumptions, methods, and claims form part of the dissertation’s conceptual framework. This explains

why substantial discussions of historical performance practice also appear within these sections. In Part III, by contrast, HIP is put into action through my own artistic engagement with historically informed practices.

The first part offers a rigorous, scholarly interpretation, proposing a framework for understanding the rhetorical-musical aesthetics of composition and performance in the period 1740–1830. This proceeds through close reading of sources to illustrate a model of the period’s idealized rhetorical performer, which applies to both oratory and music. When this performer is explicitly a musical one oriented to the historical aesthetics of sensibility, this study uses the term “feeling musician.” Towards this goal, it examines the key concepts that shaped rhetorical practice in the period and draws from an interdisciplinary body of primary sources in music, literature, theatre, cognitive psychology, and philosophy—framing key terms such as classical rhetoric, commonplaces / *topoi*, *telos*, *kairos*, “sensibility,” “sentiment,” “sympathy”, the “Sublime,” *hypotyposis*, “natural signs,” “arbitrary / instituted signs,” the “Mazy Round,” “genius,” “imagination,” and “taste” in their historical intellectual contexts. The study also introduces terms of its own to illustrate certain elements of the framework: “emotional inertia,” “coupling” between inner feeling and outward form, the “musician of feeling” or “feeling musician,” and “sympathetic interpretation.” Methodologically, Part I remains explicitly musicological: its claims are grounded in close reading of primary texts, careful definition of terms in their historical usage, and critical engagement with secondary scholarship, rather than in artistically subjective intuition.

Chapter 1 introduces classical rhetoric and its application to musical oration in the period, while Chapter 2 further explores the historical cultural context and aesthetics of sensibility. Chapter 3 examines period notions of language and proposes a conception for how a musical “language of sentiments” may have been understood in the period. Chapter 4 introduces historical acting theories for embodied delivery and addresses the question of emotional authenticity and various period and modern debates about the sincerity or performativity of emotions across different expressive performance ideologies (historical and contemporary). Here also, an argument for the re-introduction of rhetorical expressive ideologies to modern HIP is articulated. Chapter 5 focuses on period specific conceptions of “genius” and the rhetorical creative process, including the historical aesthetic psychology that guided invention, imagination, and taste. It also reframes how these historical models could reframe rhetorical and musical pedagogical materials in the modern HIP context. Finally, Chapter 6 closes Part I, by developing historical theories about the role of interpretation and fidelity. In this first part, the dissertation’s core conceptual architecture is established: it reconstructs what historical actors said and assumed about expressive means, judgement, and effect, and it delineates the limits of what can be claimed on the basis of the surviving sources.

The second part continues from this trajectory, remaining scholarly, but turns towards the more specific application of the framework established in Part I to musical performance practice in the period. Apart from the insights it offers to musicologists interested in historical and contextual understanding, this part also acts as a sort-of handbook for modern HIP performers who use such principles in a “historically inspired performance.” Where Part I primarily defines and contextualizes concepts, Part II tests how those concepts illuminate concrete musical structures, repertoires, and performance problems. Chapter 7 examines disposition, or rhetorical structuring principles that govern music on both the small scale (periods, phrases, cadences) and the large (movement-length forms) in period musical-theoretical writings. Chapter 8 examines some relevant period taxonomies of rhetorical figures and connects them to their functional interpretation in performance by harmonizing them with practical declamation-focused sources of the period. Here, some more subjective, artistic interpretations are given by the author, signaled by the first-person voice, which aim at illustrating how a HIP performer might seize upon the strategies proposed when interpreting rhetorical figures in the repertory. These first-person interventions are explicitly marked as demonstrations of artistic work, not as the evidentiary basis for the historical claims themselves.

Part III turns completely to artistic research case studies. These deal with performance and reflections from experiments both in acting via poetry and theatre, and in musical interpretation and performances, accompanied by audio/visual materials. Again, for methodological transparency, the author turns to the first-person when discussing how certain historical principles from the framework proposed in Part I and inquiry of Part II can guide an artistic interpretation. Furthermore, to re-iterate, this section does not seek to provide some sort of parallel objective “proof” or “validity” for the framework and its application to HIP. Rather, it serves to illustrate how a modern performer might use the framework by offering a documentation of personal, practical inquiry. In other words, Part III is not a second, competing argument that runs alongside the musicological one; it is an exemplificatory strand that makes the framework visible “in action,” showing how its concepts shape interpretive choices, embodied delivery, and evaluative judgement under contemporary conditions. Case Study 1 deals with John Walker’s pedagogical methods, including *The Melody of Speaking Delineated, or Elocution Taught like Music* (1787) for training the voice to declaim. Case Study 2 discusses rhetorical acting with voice and gesture through several exercises from Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (1806), including staging two scenes at the Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg. Case Study 3 draws on an article by Forkel, providing a rhetorical and sentimental analysis of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach’s Sonata in F minor Wq. 57/6 (1763), and the final case study, an artistic interpretation and account of my performance of Beethoven’s *Waldstein* Sonata (1804), provides the culmination of all the principles discussed throughout the study. Accordingly, the “results” of Part III are presented as reflective documentation—insights into process, constraints, and artistic decision-making—rather than as claims that independently confirm, falsify, or replace the argument developed in Parts I–II.

Part I: Framing the Rhetorical Approach

I. Introduction to Classical Rhetoric and the Musical Oration

The term “classical rhetoric,” as used in this study, describes a continuous tradition. It begins in antiquity, with Greco-Roman rhetorical theory and practice, and is taken up again and adapted in the early modern period and into the nineteenth century. This tradition, though evolving and reinterpreted throughout its long history, has its roots in the works of ancient Greco-Roman writers like Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, who viewed rhetoric as a practical discipline of eloquence, persuasion, and embodied delivery. This stands in contrast to most post-war academic approaches to rhetoric, which tend to treat it more broadly as a theory of discourse, ideology, and representation in language, rather than as a codified performative art. It also differs from modern public speaking or “speech training” as taught in contemporary schools (including in German *Hochschulen*), which often isolates voice technique, clarity, and presentational confidence as practical skills, but no longer frames them within the older classical system.

Throughout a long, shared history, classical rhetoric and the fine arts have been engaged in constant exchange. Orators employed a musically trained voice, in addition to facial expressions and physical gestures that drew from examples in the visual arts. Music and the visual arts were likewise influenced by rhetorical theory and practice. By the eighteenth century, rhetoric had become the “metalanguage” of expressive communication in the fine arts,¹ serving as a systematic framework for structured creativity and aesthetic evaluation. Rhetorical theory provided artists with a rich vocabulary of expressive techniques and strategies as well as didactics: a structured approach to invention and organization, and a practical understanding of how to move an audience in delivery.

The ancient canon of rhetoric, perpetuated by such ancient writers as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, detailed systematic methods for preparing orations from conception to execution. This included advancing a proposition via the discovery and elaboration of arguments (*inventio*), the arrangement and structuring of these arguments into a persuasive discourse (*dispositio*), the consideration of decorum, genre, and the application of stylism and ornament with rhetorical tropes and figures (*elocutio*), memorization and mnemonic methods (*memoria*), and finally, the delivery of the discourse itself to an audience with emotional expression (*actio*).² Specifically, delivery consisted of the trained, systematic management of the voice, physical appearance, and emotional expression through the body. This included the aural and visual: tones of voice, facial expressions, poses of the body, and gestures.

¹ McCreless, “Music and Rhetoric”, *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, p. 847.

² Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, trans. and ed. Donald A. Russell, Loeb Classical Library 125 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.3.1.

This ancient discipline was constantly re-interpreted in later epochs to suit the prevailing ideas of the day. As Erik Gunderson notes, it is “not at all inappropriate to think of rhetoric as the invention of a specific time and place.”³ It was revived in the Renaissance as a main component of a classical education for prospective gentlemen seeking careers in the court, politics, public service, jurisprudence, and the clergy. Rhetoric remained an important discipline in educational curricula throughout the eighteenth century, and its principles became closely associated with effective expression in the fine arts. While interest in imitating and emulating classical wisdom guided many artistic and cultural activities, the reception of ancient rhetoric in the eighteenth century underwent specific changes, motivated by the prevailing thinking of the era. While the traditional canon of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian remained important, new treatises appeared by contemporary authors. These included vernacular rhetoric manuals and new insights and practices informed by the scientific thinking of the Enlightenment. Cartesian rationalism and Lockean empiricism shaped the understanding of human emotion. Descartes’ *Passions de l’âme* (1649) provided a mechanistic explanation of emotion as both physiological and cognitive, reinforcing the idea that gestures, expressions, and tones could reliably evoke emotional responses. Artists and performers drew from these ideas, particularly through Charles Le Brun’s systematized visual depictions of emotions. These emotional “commonplaces” became standard rhetorical tools across media, contributing to a new, “scientifically justified” aesthetics of expression.

(Post)modern reception of historical artworks often privileges the intellectual parsing of objective features over “moving the emotions.” This includes features like semiotic and deconstructive readings, intertextuality and reception history, “death of the author,” institutional and market contexts, and identity and politics. In this reception, historical works are thus treated as culturally produced; continually reinterpreted objects whose meanings emerge in critical discourse among viewers, institutions, and power structures rather than from any stable essence.⁴ By contrast, eighteenth-century sensibilities demanded artworks whose essence was the pathetic: the deliberate “moving of the passions,” an embodied responsiveness in which expression was judged by its power to stir sentiment. In that world of taste, decorum, and the beautiful and the sublime, success lay not in analytic recognition or institutional framing, but in ravishing, persuasive effect—how convincingly an artwork or performance aroused feeling, sympathy, and moral imagination. In the opening example of the Introduction,⁵ Cicero highlights the importance of *pathos* or the emotional appeal: how it is embodied in the orator, and how an impassioned delivery engages the audience communicating through

³ Erik Gunderson, “Introduction”, *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rhetoric* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

⁴ For further reading, see Anne D’Alleva, *Methods and Theories of Art History* (London: Laurence King, 2005), esp. contents and intro (includes chapters on all of the elements of post-modern art theory: semiotics, reception, structuralism/post-structuralism, intertextuality and “death of the author”, deconstruction, and contextual/identity-based approaches).

⁵ See p. 11.

“sympathetic” emotional resonance. While emotional appeals were certainly always a crucial (if controversial)⁶ component of rhetoric, they gained increasing focus in the eighteenth-century reforms, informed by empiricism and sensationism: natural components of human experience and physiology. Hence, as will be shown in the body of this study, musical works were conceived with these rhetorical goals in mind, and an effective performance that is faithful to their design should reflect such principles.

Throughout the course of the early eighteenth century, rhetorical education became increasingly sentimentalized. It shifted its focus towards stylism, sensibility, the cultivation of taste, and the embodiment of emotions in the fine arts. Enlightenment pedagogy transformed rhetorical ideals through figures like Charles Rollin. His *De la manière d'enseigner et d'étudier les Belles-Lettres par rapport à l'esprit et au cœur* (1726–28) became a foundational rhetorical curriculum, emphasizing elegance, taste, and emotional intelligence. Notably, within his volume dedicated to rhetoric, Rollin presents modern French authors as stylistic guides, emphasizing the cultivation of ‘good taste’ with a sublime, ‘noble simplicity’ enabling “the student to speak and write effectively.”⁷ Rollin’s ideal of the *galant homme* extended the ancient *vir bonus* (the virtuous orator) into a socially refined, emotionally expressive, and morally cultivated gentleman.⁸ This figure—cultivated through the arts, polite conversation, and eloquence—reflected the Enlightenment’s synthesis of rhetorical, aesthetic, and ethical values. As Peter France notes, eighteenth-century rhetorical education became “a stylistic doctrine” and “increasingly, an apprenticeship in literary appreciation,” and “the formation of polite taste.”⁹ Similarly, according to Paul Goring, Britain saw reforms in oratory that brought it from “a patrician, scholastic discipline to a more accessible and democratic form of discourse, involving regular appeals to the emotions of the audience.”¹⁰

1.1 The Art of Persuasion from Commonplaces

In classical terms, Aristotle distinctly defined rhetoric as the “art of persuasion”: specifically an art in itself, separate from other subjects, but applicable to all: rhetoric is a framework that underlies many different arts. While rhetoric is often associated with oratory, the precepts of rhetoric can be used effectively in many different contexts and artistic endeavours: speeches, the epistolary art, and other situations where a rhetorician seeks to advance a cause: an intent, or purpose: so-called rhetorical *telos*. In most fine arts, this manifests as producing a desired response in an audience. Rhetoric deals with

⁶ For further reading, see Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, pp. 1–25.

Charles L. Griswold, “Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/plato-rhetoric>.

Christof Rapp, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/aristotle-rhetoric>.

⁷ Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, p. 201.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁹ Peter France, “Rhetoric”, *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, Vol. I, ed. K. Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 497.

¹⁰ Paul Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 39.

general precepts which can likewise be adapted to specific disciplines: the specifics of which are known by artists in their craft.¹¹

Aristotle describes persuasive argument as “a sort of demonstration, since we are most strongly convinced when we suppose anything to have been demonstrated,” and that persuasive arguments are enthymeme: a type of syllogism that need not be logically complete to be effective.¹² The orator’s facilitated demonstration can be an emotional or a logical one with proof, but the audience must be convinced by the suitability of the demonstration itself to be persuaded. According to Quintilian, some subjects require emotion, while some do not. Likewise, others require proof, but proof is not a requisite for persuasion for all subjects.¹³ Certainly, a thesis defence would not be viewed favourably if the presenter tried to raise their grade by shedding pints of tears to arouse pity for their plight.

Rhetorical *telos* (from Greek τέλος), related to the cause of the orator, refers to the end, purpose, or goal of a rhetorical act, which includes why something is done, the intended effect on the audience, or the ultimate aim of communication (e.g., to persuade, to move, to delight, to instruct).¹⁴ Translated to musical performance or composition, *telos* would imply an expressive intention: often what emotional or intellectual result the artist seeks to effect. Closely related to *telos* is affect—the passion or sentiment that the rhetorician or musician wishes to excite. Where *telos* looks to the overarching purpose, affect concerns the specific emotional colouration through which that purpose is pursued. Yet the perspective of the audience introduces a third concept: effect. Whereas *telos* belongs to the speaker’s or performer’s intention and affect to the emotional means by which that intention is pursued, effect concerns the outcome—whether the rhetoric has, in fact, succeeded in its aim. As William Waring notes in his 1779 translation of Rousseau’s *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768), the *effect* of a musical work is “an agreeable and strong impression which an excellent music imprints on the ear and mind of an audience.”¹⁵ In this sense, effect is not merely what was intended, but what was actually received—whether the audience was convinced, moved, or persuaded in the way the rhetorician had hoped.

Another important concept in rhetoric, *kairos*, is sometimes paraphrased as “the opportune moment.” As Jette Barnholdt Hansen explains in *Performing the Eighteenth Century* (2023), *kairos* is not merely timing in a mechanical sense, but an awareness of the unique, responsive relationship between performer, audience, and moment. *Kairos* highlights that effective performance is contingent upon context, for example, the mood of the audience, the particular scene, and the energy of the space.

¹¹ See Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese. Revised by Gisela Striker. Loeb Classical Library 193 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), §1355b25–26.

¹² Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, §1355a11.

¹³ Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, 3.5.3.

¹⁴ See Cicero, *On Ends*, trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library 40. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), p. 244.

¹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Complete Dictionary of Music*, trans. William Waring, 2nd edition. (London: 1779), p. 150.

It must be adaptively sensed rather than rigidly or prescriptively enacted.¹⁶ Hence, a rhetorician uses their judgement to sense and mould the effectiveness of their delivery as they deliver.

How does he rhetorician, according to Aristotle, persuade? Aristotle provides a justification of how his rhetoric differs from mere sophistry, or manipulation. While sophistry focused on non-argumentative methods designed to distract from the topic itself: slander, confusing or distracting the audience, manipulative emotional appeals, etc., Aristotle asserts that his teachings focus on argumentative methods only, and “even methods that have traditionally been used instead of argumentation can be refined so that they support the aim of an argumentative style of rhetoric.”¹⁷ Plato had defined a more rational alternative to rhetoric, dialectic, in which the logical syllogism and induction (*epagoge*) are used to facilitate demonstration, and it is thus based on the enumeration and elaboration of premises. However, Aristotle defines another type of syllogism: the *enthymeme*, or “rhetorical syllogism,” which differs in that it has implicit premises reliant on *doxa*, or a general opinion, belief, or perception, which may or may not be true, that is commonly held by members of an orator’s audience. The term is often used to describe unexamined or popular beliefs that people accept without critical scrutiny. For instance, in many of his speeches, the ancient orator Cicero derives many arguments by appealing to the commonplace “Rome must be protected at all costs”—an argument which works when the audience is Roman.

In service of this goal, the orator must know their audience, and can build a persuasive argument on rhetorical topics, *topoi* or “commonplaces:” conventionalized, structural patterns of thought, reasoning, argument, or expression that help speakers and writers generate communicable content and persuade effectively within certain stylistic or cultural norms. As the early eighteenth-century aesthetician Jean-Baptiste Du Bos called them, “les signes naturels des passions” (natural signs of the passions), or the physical expression of the emotions through voice, face, and gesture, was one of the most important shared commonplaces in the fine arts, believed to be universally legible for all peoples. For example, Du Bos noted that the effect produced by the visual arts was particularly powerful because they did “not use artificial signs [...] but natural signs” and “it is with natural signs that painting makes its imitations.”¹⁸ Moreover, for Du Bos, natural signs were equally important in vocal music, as the “natural signs of passion that music brings together and skillfully uses to enhance the power of the words it sets to music must therefore make them more capable of moving us [...] They derive from

¹⁶ Jette Barnholdt Hansen, “Adequate Rhetorical Delivery when Staging Premodernity: A Combination of Synchronic and Diachronic Approaches”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 17–19.

¹⁷ Christof Rapp, “Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. First published May 2, 2002; substantive revision March 15, 2022. Accessed 23 October 2025. Section 4.5. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-rhetoric/>.

¹⁸ Je crois que le pouvoir de la peinture est plus grand [...] La seconde est que la peinture n’emploie pas des signes artificiels [...] mais bien des signes naturels. C’est avec des signes naturels que la peinture fait ses imitations.

Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, “Si le pouvoir de la Peinture...”, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, vol. 1 (Utrecht: Étienne Neaulme, 1732), Première Partie, Sect. XL, p. 217.

nature itself.”¹⁹ The concept of music’s inherent connection to natural signs was a significant topic in the mid-eighteenth century, which will be explored further in the subsequent section and Chapter 3. But various artistic disciplines may have their own specific topics rooted in stylistic and cultural conventions. In eighteenth-century poetry, commonplaces might include themes that can be elaborated in countless ways but are widely understood within a cultural framework. Musical *topoi* function similarly, offering composers conventional musical idioms associated with specific affects or social contexts. Examples include the lament, often featuring descending lines and minor keys to express sorrow; the minuet, evoking courtly grace; the hunt topic, with horn calls and dotted rhythms suggesting nobility and the rustic countryside; or the storm, using tremolos, quick-moving runs, syncopations and harmonic instability to conjure turbulence. For the rhetorical performer interpreting music, understanding the expressive content of music through these commonplaces lies at the centre of a rhetorical approach, allowing them to unlock the “sealed” content within a musical score to re-animate in a performance. A list of some common musical commonplaces may be found in the appendix of this study.

It is the task of the orator to invent arguments that draw from commonplaces, organize them effectively, and deliver them with appropriate fire to facilitate the “persuasion” of their audiences. For example, in the domain of musical rhetoric, one of Haydn’s early biographers Ignaz Theodor Ferdinand Arnold uses the rhetorical syllogism to describe the operation of Haydn’s rhetorical genius in his music. Arnold states that Haydn’s music convinces:

in the manner of a clever orator, who, when he wants to convince us of something, proceeds from the basis of a sentence that is universally recognized to be true, one with which everyone agrees, one that everyone must be able to understand; but he [Haydn] knows so cunningly just how to use this idea, that he can soon convince us of anything he wishes to, even if it is the very contrary of the original idea. In this way, Haydn’s music enters our ears quite smoothly, for we have a sense that we are hearing something that is easily perceived and already familiar to us; but we soon find that it is not that which we had thought it was or which we thought it should become. We hear something new and are amazed at the master, who knew so cunningly how to offer us, under the guise of the well known, something never before heard.²⁰

¹⁹ Les signes naturels des passions que la musique rassemble & qu’elle employe avec art pour augmenter l’énergie des paroles qu’elle met en chant, doivent donc les rendre plus capables de nous toucher [...] Ils la tiennent de la nature même. Jean-Baptiste Du Bos, “De la Musique proprement dite”, *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, vol. 1, Première Partie, Sect. XLVI, 366.

²⁰ Er macht es wie ein schlauer Redner, der, wenn er uns zu etwas überreden will, von einem allgemein als wahr anerkannten Satze ausgeht, den jeder einsieht, jeder begreifen muss, bald aber diesen Satz so geschickt zu wenden versteht, dass er uns zu allen überreden kann, wozu er nur will, und wärs zum Gegentheile des aufgestellten Satzes. So geht Haydns Musik glatt dem Gehöre ein, weil wir wähnen, etwas leichtfassliches, schon Vernommenes zu vernehmen; allein bald finden wir, dass es nicht

For Arnold, Haydn's rhetorical manipulation is achieved by first establishing a theme (sentence) that is conventional to the listener: universally accepted within the *doxa* of late eighteenth-century instrumental styles. This *doxa* is built upon the audience's familiarity with "commonplaces:" the internal logic of musical style and tradition. Next, Haydn begins playing with the expectations of his listeners, forging those same "argumentative links" from what was accepted to what is new. Through Haydn's genius, this statement is elaborated, expanded, contracted, and molded in diverse ways. However, the listener is convinced because Haydn skillfully crafts manipulations onto what was already accepted—the aforementioned argumentative links—and eventually leads the listener to something novel and inventive, leaving them amazed. This creates an extraordinary effect that captivates the attention, stimulates the intellect, and solidifies Haydn's reputation as a master rhetorician.

1.2 The Alliance of Music and Oratory

Music's innate power over the passions has been known since antiquity. From Ovid's mythical telling of Orpheus quelling the Furies with his lyre, to Polybius's account of the virtuous temperance ancient Arcadians brought about by their strong devotion to musical education, the power of music to strike the mind, delight the senses, instill moral virtue, and most importantly, move the passions is well documented in classical mythology and history. As stated in the introduction, just as the techniques of oratory were an important component of musical theory and criticism, the art of public speaking was likewise informed by musical training. Cicero provides an elaborate explanation in *De Oratore* (55 BCE):

For nature has assigned to every emotion a particular look and tone of voice and bearing of its own; and the whole of a person's frame and every look on his face and utterance of his voice are like the strings of a harp, and sound according as they are struck by each successive emotion. For the tones of the voice are keyed up like the strings of an instrument, so as to answer to every touch, high, low, quick, slow, *forte*, *piano*, while between all of these in their several kinds there is a medium note; and there are also the various modifications derived from these, smooth or rough, limited or full in volume, *tenuto* or *staccato*, faint or harsh, *diminuendo* or *crescendo*. For there are none of these varieties that cannot be regulated by the control of art; they are the colours available for the actor, as for the painter, to secure variety.²¹

For Cicero, qualities of music like pitch, inflection, articulation, timbre, tempo, and dynamics are integral to the orator's expressive voice, which is played like a harp. These characteristics mimic the human passions as they are expressed naturally, and their artful expression produces the same

das wird, nicht das ist, was wir glaubten das es sey, das es werden sollte, wir hören etwas Neues und staunen über den Meister, der so schlau Unerhörtes uns unter dem Anstrich des Allbekannten zu bieten wusste.

Ignaz Theodor Ferdinand Arnold, *Joseph Haydn. Seine kurze Biographie und ästhetische Darstellung seiner Werke* (Erfurt: J. C. Müller, 1810), 101–102; adapted from the trans. by Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 138.

²¹ Cicero, *On the Orator: Book 3. On Fate. Stoic Paradoxes. Divisions of Oratory*, 3. LVII, pp. 216–18.

sympathetic response in listeners: the so-termed affect of the orator. Thus, the musical qualities of the voice are essential to moving through *pathos* and are the brushes the musician uses to paint the passions.

Cicero's view was enthusiastically conveyed by many eighteenth-century theorists, including Du Bos, who highlights the connection between music and poetry.²² According to musicologist Bruce Haynes, in the early modern period, it might be more accurate to "describe music as one form that Rhetoric took."²³ Much like music, early modern poetry was typically written with the intention of live delivery in mind. In various eighteenth-century declamation manuals, certain poetic features like rhythm, metre, punctuation, caesura, italicization, and the use of rhetorical figures were interpreted as performative instructions to inform the way the reciter should pronounce the text aloud. The musical theorist Johann Phillip Kirnberger, writing in an article for Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (1771–74), reflects Cicero's ideals, connecting the emotions to particular natural expressions in sound, which can likewise affect a listener through sensation, or sensibility:

Nature has established a direct connection between the ear and heart. Each emotion suggests particular sounds, while these sounds may in turn awaken in the heart those deep-felt emotions from which they sprang. A cry of fear terrifies us; joyful sounds awaken happiness.²⁴

German theorist Johann Joseph Klein (1740–1823) states that the arts of oratory and poetry are "so closely related to the art of music that anyone wishing to study music seriously cannot afford to remain ignorant of them" because "all of these arts work toward a common goal: to master our feelings, and to give our passions a certain direction."²⁵ German music theorist, composer, and poet Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart describes the act of musical composition to be just like poetry:

The musical manner of writing is as diverse as the poetic [...] the musician observes just those principles which the poet and orator have to observe; thus [it] is a sure proof of the close bond that unites the arts with one another.²⁶

²² Du Bos, "De la Musique proprement dite", *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, vol. 1, Première Partie, Sect. XLVI, 366.

²³ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, p.166.

²⁴ Johann Phillip Kirnberger, ed. Johann Georg Sulzer, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment*, trans. and ed. by Nancy Baker, Thomas Christensen, and Ian Bent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 81.

²⁵ Redekunst und Dichtkunst sind mit der Tonkunst zu genau verwandt, als dass einer, der die Musik ernstlich studiren will, damit unbekannt bleiben sollte Sie arbeiten sämtlich zu einem gemeinschaftlichen Endzweck, unserer Empfindungen sich zu bemeistern, und unsern Leidenschaften eine bestimmte Richtung zu geben. Johann Joseph Klein, *Versuch eines Lehrbuchs der praktischen Musik* (Gera: C. F. Bekmann, 1783), p. 15; trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 59.

²⁶ Die musikalische Schreibart ist so verschieden, wie die poetische. Sie kann erhaben und populär, einfältig und geschmückt, prächtig und simpel, hoch und niedrig, ernst und scherzend, tragisch und komisch, tiefsinnig und leicht, stark aber nie schwach seyn. In der Mannigfaltigkeit und Mischung dieser Style beobachtet der Musiker eben die Grundsätze, welche der Dichter und Redner zu beobachten hat; ein sichrer Beweis von dem genauen Bande, das die Künste unter einander verbindet. Christian

These assessments are not only limited to the theories of philosophers and aestheticians. The most prominent performers of the period are quick to support this idea. The Berlin court flautist, Johann Joachim Quantz wrote in his *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752):

Musical execution must be compared with the delivery of an orator. The musician and the orator have, at bottom [sic], the same aim in regard to both the preparation and the final execution of their productions, namely to make themselves masters of the hearts of their listeners, to arouse or still their passions, and to transport them now to this sentiment, now to that. Thus, it is advantageous to both, if each has some knowledge of the duties of the other.²⁷

Similarly, in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (1753, 1st edition), the composer and keyboardist Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach describes a good musical performance as having “the ability through singing or playing to make the ear conscious of the true content and affect of a composition.”²⁸

Even well into the nineteenth century, similar parallels were drawn between music and oratory. In his *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* (1827), Johann Nepomuk Hummel notes: “Just as certain syllables or words need to be emphasised in speech [...] so too does such emphasis occur in music.”²⁹ Similarly, writing in 1839, Carl Czerny, reminiscing on the playing of Muzio Clementi, praises his “clear, fluent delivery, and correct declamation.”³⁰ But Czerny also notes that this observance is just as relevant in the “modern” brilliant piano school of 1839: Hummel, Meyerbeer, Kalkbrenner and Moscheles, which is characterized by “the most consummate clarity suited to every venue; and a correct declamation intelligible to everyone, combined with elegant and refined taste.”³¹ Even at this later point, these sources show that pianism was closely linked to declamatory practice, and even in the face of changing musical style, aesthetic theories had a degree of continuity.

Friedrich Daniel Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, ed. Ludwig Schubart (Wien: J. V. Degen, 1806), p. 343; trans. Ted Alan DuBois “Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart's ‚Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst‘: An Annotated Translation”, PhD diss. (University of Southern California, 1983), p. 398.

²⁷ Johann Joachim Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward R. Reilly, 2nd edition (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2011), p. 118, from XI.1.

²⁸ Worinn aber besteht der gute Vortrag? in nichts andern als der Fertigkeit, musikalische Gedancken nach ihrem wahren Inhalte und Affect singend oder spielend dem Gehöre empfindlich zu machen. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 1st edition, Part I, p. 117 (§2); trans. William J. Mitchell, p. 148.

²⁹ Wie in der Sprache die Betonung gewisser Silben oder Worte nöthig ist ... so findet solche eine Betonung auch in der Musik statt. Johann Nepomuk Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel, vom ersten Elementar-Unterrichte an, bis zur vollkommensten Ausbildung* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, n.d. [c. 1828]), Part III, Zweiter Abschnitt, §7, p. 441.

³⁰ deutlichen geläufigen Vortrag, und richtige Deklamation aus. Carl Czerny, *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule, von dem ersten Anfange bis zur höchsten Ausbildung fortschreitend, mit zahlreichen Beispielen*, op. 500 (Vienna: A. Diabelli u. Comp, [1839]), Teil III, Kap. 15 (“Über die besondere Art des Vortrags verschiedener Tonsetzer...”), §6.

³¹ Die neuere, durch Hummel, Meyerbeer, Kalkbrenner und Moscheles gegründete brillante Schule. Ihre Eigenthümlichkeiten sind [...] die vollendetste, für jedes Locale berechnete Deutlichkeit; und eine richtige, für Jedermann verständliche Deklamation, verbunden mit elegantem und feinem Geschmack. Czerny, *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Pianoforte-Schule*, Teil III, Kap. 15 (“Über die besondere Art des Vortrags verschiedener Tonsetzer ...”), §6.

Recall the continuity between C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven established in the introduction, which held that the effective musician required a union of technique inhabited by genuine feeling. C.P.E. Bach had invoked the famous mantra of the antique poet Horace when he asserted that a musician “cannot move others unless he too is moved. He must of necessity feel all of the affects that he hopes to arouse in his audience, for the revealing of his own humour will stimulate a like humour in the listener.”³² This idea, as has been already shown, enjoyed a great degree of continuity throughout the period 1740–1830, and was re-iterated and expanded by numerous authors. For instance, the theorist, composer and keyboardist Daniel Gottlieb Türk reiterates the same theme in his *Clavierschule* (1789). Türk describes a good performer as one who “performs a composition so that the affect, even in every single passage, is most faithfully expressed (made perceptible) and that the tones become at the same time a language of feelings.”³³ Similarly, in his *Versuch einer gründlichen Violinschule* (1756), Leopold Mozart also provides similar insight, advising the performer to “make the greatest effort to discover and render the affect the composer sought to express.” He continues, noting that: “one must play in a way that moves oneself. It is bad enough that some players never think of what they are doing, but just play their music as in a dream or as though they are playing for themselves.”³⁴ For Leopold Mozart, a performer who is emotionally distant from their production, lacking affective engagement, will struggle to establish the sympathetic connection necessary for rhetorical persuasion. The audience will not be able to feel the effect of the music because the player has not made the feelings communicable to others: it is as if they “are playing for themselves.” These writers align with a vision of a rhetorical performer whose task is not merely prescriptive technical execution of the right notes at the right time, but the communicative embodiment of affect: the inner feelings they feel are united with the execution and influence it. To persuade effectively, this model of musician internalizes and projects emotional content in a way that elicits a mirrored, sympathetic response in the listener. This reflects eighteenth-century psychological concepts like sympathetic imagination, which posit that the performer could imaginatively enter the sentimental world of the music—and by extension, the mind of the composer through their ideas imprinted in the “artifact” (the musical score)—in order to animate the work authentically. In this way, the sentimental content which the composer baked into the score needs to be understood, felt, and “lived” in the imagination by the interpreters as they perform it. Such ideals are part of the concept this study terms the “feeling” musician: a musician sensitive to the emotions they express and influenced by them in their execution. This feedback in the so-called “feeling” musician can enhance his/her delivery. These ideas, built upon central concepts in eighteenth-century thought, will be explored in greater depth in the following chapters, culminating in Chapter 6.

³² Bach, *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, p. 152.

³³ Daniel Gottlieb Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, trans. Raymond H. Haggh (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 323.

³⁴ Leopold Mozart, *The Art of the Violin*, trans. Elisabeth Kaplan, from the 1769 edition of the *Gründliche Violinschule* (Salzburg: Kulturverlag Polzer, 2008), p. 301, XII.7.

Treatises on musical rhetoric offer indispensable insight in piecing together a period framework for rhetorical performance. Rather than adhering to a single authority, they are best understood as a composite tradition—often eclectic, sometimes contradictory, yet unified by a broader intellectual milieu in which rhetorical expression served as a core paradigm for the understanding of music. Far from being an ossified system in the late eighteenth century, musical rhetoric evolved alongside changing aesthetic values. The primary theorists of the mid- to late eighteenth century— Johann Mattheson, Johann Adolph Scheibe, Joseph Riepel, Heinrich Christoph Koch, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, and Georg Joseph Vogler—represent a lineage of thinkers who integrated rhetorical theory with musical composition and performance, often in dialogue with the evolving aesthetic of sentimentalism. For instance, Mattheson’s *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) provided an encyclopedic rhetorical framework for composition and performance, influencing major composers such as Haydn, who owned and used the text and claimed it to be a formative influence,³⁵ and allegedly even the young Beethoven.³⁶ As Bartel underscores, Mattheson saw rhetoric as a means to understand music:

just as music and rhetoric share common goals, so do they share common methodologies, structuring principles, and expressive devices. While these were traditionally defined and systematized by the rhetorical discipline, they are equally evident and applicable to the musical art. These musical phenomena which are described in rhetorical terminology have a long-standing history. And while it is helpful to articulate the musical-rhetorical material, it can also be gleaned both from well-composed music and from naturally-gifted musical expression [i.e. genius] through empirical observation.³⁷

For Bartel, Mattheson uses rhetoric as a tool to systematize the composition and performance of music. Its figures, topics, and strategies are legible in well-made works: even a “genius” without formal rhetorical training will tend to compose rhetorically, because the same principles that govern effective persuasion also structure convincing musical discourse. For Mattheson, then, classical rhetoric is not an optional analogy but a foundational discipline.

Similarly, Johann Adolf Scheibe’s *Der Critische Musikus* (1737–40) promoted melodic clarity in the *galant* style, adapting rhetorical figures for instrumental music, and influenced the shift toward melodic simplicity and expressive naturalness. Joseph Riepel’s *Anfangsgründe zur musikalischen Setzkunst* (1752–68) taught musical “grammar” in a witty dialogue, popular among theorists like C.F.D. Schubart, and Forkel, and known to Leopold and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, thus shaping pedagogical

³⁵ David Wyn Jones, “Becoming a complete Kapellmeister: Haydn and Mattheson’s ‘Der vollkommene Capellmeister’”, *Studia Musicologica* 51, no. 1/2 (2010), pp. 29–40.

³⁶ See Elaine Rochelle Sisman, “Pathos and the Pathétique: rhetorical stance in Beethoven’s C minor sonata, Op. 13”, *Beethoven Forum* 3 (1994), p. 82.

³⁷ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 143.

traditions.³⁸ Heinrich Christoph Koch's *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Komposition* (1782–93) systematized phrase-building (*Satzkunst*) for late eighteenth-century styles, drawing on contemporary composers like Haydn, Mozart, and C.P.E. Bach as models, and laying groundwork for later Classical and early Romantic forms. Likewise, his *Musikalisches Lexicon* (1802) gives a rhetorically-informed viewpoint on many aspects of musical composition and performance. Johann Nikolaus Forkel's writings called for a rigorous rhetorical approach in music that influenced scholarly discourse. Georg Joseph Vogler, with pupils including Carl Maria von Weber, Franz Danzi, and Giacomo Meyerbeer, disseminated rhetorical composition in his extensive pedagogical manuals, blending classical devices in works like fugues and variations, ensuring that rhetorical approaches remained vital in both compositional theory and pedagogy well into the nineteenth century.

1.3 Overview of the Discipline: The Canons of Rhetoric

What was the creative process that an orator followed from start to finish? Quintilian, drawing from Cicero and Aristotle before him, divides the orator's process into five canons, that form the foundation for the rhetorical discipline:

1. *Inventio* (invention): The invention of ideas, topics (*topos*), subject,
2. *Dispositio* (disposition): The arrangement of ideas into a logical structure,
3. *Elocutio* (elocution): The ideas are elaborated stylistically according to the genre (which determines a work's function), with appropriate ornament, fitness, and decorum.
4. *Memoria* (memory): Memorization of the speech and mnemonic methods.
5. *Actio, pronuntiatio* (delivery, performance): Delivery, or performance, with the use of suitable voice, facial expressions, and physical gestures.³⁹

These divisions include all the activities and considerations necessary for preparing a speech from conception to final performance. Throughout history, alternative divisions have been proposed, but the underlying principles of the entire process have remained consistent.⁴⁰ While the process is often described as a progression, it is important to recognize the interdependence between its various components. For example, the logical structuring, genre, and style of presenting ideas are directly influenced by the nature of the topics being discussed. Moreover, the delivery of the work heavily relies on a comprehensive understanding of the preceding steps. Making appropriate emphasis, cadence, affect, action, and gesture demands a grasp of the subject's meaning and the underlying structure and elaboration of the work. This section aims to provide a concise overview of each canon below.

³⁸ John Walter Hill, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order, Phrase and Form: A Translation of His Anfangsgründe zur musicalischen Setzkunst, Chapters 1 and 2 (1752/54, 1755)*, *Harmonologia: Studies in Music Theory*, 20 (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 2014), p. 420.

³⁹ Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, 3.3.1.

⁴⁰ Quintilian defends his inclusion of "Memory" and "Delivery" in *ibid.*, 3.34.

Inventio was the first division of the creative process and is concerned with the discovery of relevant arguments to support a cause through systematic techniques. Every orator begins with a cause: a reason for their speech. Consequently, these tools require first understanding the appropriate arguments for the specific circumstances of the oration itself. From here, the orator would develop their argument from rhetorical commonplaces (*topoi*). These again function as mental “locations” or “regions” where arguments reside—reliable sources of invention that help the rhetor discover what to say about a given subject.

Dispositio is the persuasive ordering of ideas across scales—from periods (sentences) and phrases to sections, paragraphs, and long discourses. Rhetorical grammar governs how small units combine, yielding sentences and periods that are distinct, proportioned, and sequenced for effect. In music, this is *Satzbau*: motives shaped into phrases, phrases into periods, and these into larger designs. Crucially, recognizing small-order constructions informs delivery. For example, period boundaries demand delineation: cadential punctuation and breath. Thus, *dispositio* is not merely logical arrangement but aesthetic ordering that makes sure that every element in a structure contributes to a convincing whole, or the overall *telos*. Furthermore, when poetry or music traces a succession of passions, the progression should read as psychologically plausible and prepared by clear transitions. Each turn in affect should be motivated, proportioned, signposted, and rendered naturally. Contrast heightens expression only when this natural continuity is preserved, as abrupt shocks should feel earned by the dramatic situation. In short, the sequence of emotions should unfold with the logic of lived experience, not as arbitrary, idiosyncratic, or enigmatic alternations of mood. Rhetorical disposition will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Elocutio is concerned with speaking in style; it is elocution, or eloquence. This includes notions of propriety, genre, and decorum, as well as elaboration via ornament and rhetorical figures. For Quintilian, an orator who speaks “with elegance and Ornament, the orator is out to recommend himself as well as his Cause, and seeks not only (as in all his other activities) the judgement of experts, but also the praise of the general public; he is fighting with weapons that are not only effective but polished and gleaming.”⁴¹ An important part of *elocutio* concerns the use of tropes and rhetorical figures, which are expressive patterns or stylistic devices that enhance the persuasiveness, clarity, or emotional impact by shaping how ideas are presented. They elaborate, embellish, and adorn ideas in a discourse, making them livelier.⁴² According to Charles Rollin in 1727, these figures “are certain turns and modes of expression, which differ [...] from the common and plain way of speaking, and are used to give more grace and force to the discourse.”⁴³ In 1785, the elocutionist John Walker defined a figure as “a manner

⁴¹ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education, Volume III: Books 6-8*, 8.3.3.

⁴² Tarling, *The Weapons of Rhetoric*, p. 189.

⁴³ Charles Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles-Lettres, or, an Introduction to Languages, Poetry, Rhetoric, History, Moral Philosophy, Physics, etc.*, Vol. II, 6th edition (London: Printed for W. Strahan, J. and F. Rivington, R. Baldwin, L. Hawes, W. Clarke, R. Collins, [...], 1769), p. 1.

of speaking distinguished by a particular modification, which reduces it to a certain class; and which renders it more lively, more noble, and more agreeable, than a manner of speaking which expresses the same thought without this particular modification of it.”⁴⁴ For Walker and others, the figures were often prescriptive of a certain pattern of delivery. Once their pattern is recognized by a speaker, they could animate its effect in delivery by following the performance instructions given in various rhetorical grammar treatises. In music, rhetorical figures were applied analogously to musical features and codified in various taxonomies. Composers like Mattheson, Scheibe, and Forkel, gave important taxonomies of these musical rhetorical figures in various treatises. The application of rhetorical figures to musical practice will be discussed in Chapter 8.

The canon of *memoria* deals with memory. Effective speaking requires memorization. In order to convey an argument effectively with fluency, an orator should know the entire roadmap of his discourse. As Quintilian wrote:

when you are going to plead you must not only hold many things firmly in mind, but apprehend them quickly. It is not enough to keep hold of what you have written by reading it over and over again; you must also follow the chain of facts and words contained in what you have thought out, remember everything that has been said by the other side, and refute it, not necessarily in the order in which it was said, but arranging it as is most advantageous.⁴⁵

For Quintilian, effective delivery rests on more than rote repetition: an orator must possess a mental map of the case—its claims, proofs, transitions, and refutations. To “follow the chain of facts and words” is to grasp causes and logical joints, such that if a sentence slips, the argument lets an orator rebuild it in the moment. Because opponents and circumstances disrupt any fixed order, memory should also be agile. The practical upshot is a form of ownership and agency that frees the speaker, allowing the orator to inhabit the ideas they profess to “speak from the heart.” It is likely that many musicians will recognize the analogue: knowing a work so completely that delivery can adapt to the circumstances of a performance without breaking the thread. In this way, full command of the material of execution will free up the imagination to imbue execution with feeling. Similarly, Türk wrote:

Whoever reads a poem he does not know and which is not completely comprehensible to him would probably find it difficult for him to declaim every single passage in such a way that a listener possessing good taste would find nothing left to be desired. This is also certainly the case in music. Not until a musician knows a composition will he be able to play every part of it with complete skill and with the required expression. Whoever can do this with a composition completely unknown to him is certainly to be envied in this regard; even

⁴⁴ John Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar; or, A Plain System of Rules for Critical Observations on Speaking and Writing*, 1st edition (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1785), p. 156.

⁴⁵ Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, 11.2.2.

the greatest masters of art maintain that it is possible in only a very few cases to express the character of a composition which they do not know, that is, down to every last nuance.⁴⁶

Türk's point aligns with Quintilian: expression presupposes knowledge. Just as a poem cannot be tastefully declaimed before its sense and syntax are grasped, a score cannot be fully characterized before its structure, affect, and rhetoric are understood and internalized. Even great artists, Türk notes, can only occasionally approximate a work's character at sight. Practically, preparation becomes a rhetorical act of *memoria*.

Actio, or delivery, deals with the performance of an oration. When asked about the three most crucial aspects of oratory, the renowned ancient Greek orator Demosthenes enthusiastically responded: "*Actio, actio, actio!*"⁴⁷ *Actio* focuses on the actual "doing" of public presentation. Beyond the use of the voice, it encompasses appropriate action and gestures of the body. For an audience, "all emotions inevitably languish," underscores Quintilian, "unless they are kindled into flame by voice, face, and the bearing of virtually the whole body."⁴⁸ Cicero was of the same mindset.⁴⁹ Delivery is where rhetoric's demonstration takes place, and therefore it is the culmination of all the other canons. Quintilian remarks: "it matters less what sort of things we have composed within ourselves than how we utter them, because people are affected according to what they hear."⁵⁰

Action, or the art of acting, was an integral part of delivery, used to convince the audience to sympathize with the affects the orator intended to convey. This usually involved some sort of psychosomatic process, using the imagination to draw upon a conventional vocabulary of emotional commonplaces, consisting of certain tones, facial expressions, and gestures annexed to each passion. This included a trained, musical voice and the physicality of embodied expression through attitude (the pose), gestures, and facial expressions. Pre-Stanislawskian rhetorical acting differed markedly from modern methods. Where Stanislavski privileges inner causation—objectives, given circumstances, subtext, beats, and (in some strands) affective memory—rhetorical acting foregrounded outward *signs* that make passions legible to spectators. Instead of excavating intricate backstories to secure psychological verisimilitude, early modern actors prioritized how they were "saying the lines"⁵¹ (as Jed Wentz puts it): an artful, effective pronunciation of the text and a heightened, disciplined, more aesthetic rendering of the natural signs—often expressed with the phrase "Nature improved"—in embodied expression. Training emphasized controllable externals: prosody, tempo, emphasis, and a codified repertory of gestures and attitudes (*chironomia*) keyed to classical passions and figures of speech. Much as musicians read notation, actors read the script for performance cues embedded in its conventions

⁴⁶ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 321.

⁴⁷ Beghin, *The Virtual Haydn*, p. 43.

⁴⁸ Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, 11.3.3.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.3.8.

⁵⁰ Quintilian. *The Orator's Education*, 11.3.2.

⁵¹ Wentz, "Introduction: 'I was just saying the lines.'", *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 37.

(e.g., italicization in English to mark emphasis, a device Aaron Hill exploits), aligning vocal inflection and gesture with linguistic structures—periods, antitheses, climaxes.

That said, the common modern assumption that “classical” rhetorical acting, or pre-Stanislavskian acting, was merely performative externals without an engine of inner feeling is a misconception. As will be shown in the following chapters, a survey of sentimentalist acting discourse from c. 1740–1830 (Hill, Lessing, Walker, Engel, among others) shows repeated insistence that genuine feeling is indispensable: inner sentiment drives the grand, heightened expressions and prevents them from becoming empty affectation. The codified signs were not masks for manipulation but disciplined channels through which authentic affect could be communicated with clarity and force. Decorum shaped expression, but it did not replace sincerity. Certainly not all actors were up to the challenge—histrionic or hollow performances occur in all epochs—but to cast rhetorical acting wholesale as mere histrionics or manipulation flattens the historical record. Sentimentalist acting theory sought a fusion: inward feeling kindled by imagination and sentiment, outwardly realized through the signs of a shared vocabulary that made passion intelligible and persuasive.

The art of gesture was always an important component of oratory. The movements of the body were meant to work in concert with the sense of the text and the sound of the voice, such that the whole frame could amplify the ideas expressed. Cicero describes the power of “corporeal eloquence,” a concept which Lessing would later inherit:

by action the body talks, so it is all the more necessary to make it agree with the thought; and nature has given us eyes, [...] to indicate the feelings of the mind, so that in the matter of delivery which we are now considering the face is next in importance to the voice; and the eyes are the dominant feature in the face.⁵²

The tradition of ancient gesture was adopted into early modern oratory. As Burgh described in 1761, “*Every part of the human frame contributes to express the passions and the emotions of the mind, and to shew in general its present state.*”⁵³ As will be shown in Chapter 3, various writers in the eighteenth century believed in music’s inherent ability to paint action through its own *topoi*. A deeper exploration of the techniques and principles of rhetorical *actio* in the period including a comparison to modern performance ideologies will be explored in Chapter 4.

1.4 Rhetorical Delivery as Embodied Communication

Turning back to one of the opening quotations from the introduction, recall the dismissive description of Clementi’s keyboard playing Mozart reported to his father on 12 January 1782:

⁵² Cicero, *On the Orator*, III.223.

⁵³ Burgh, *The Art of Public Speaking*, 1st edition (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1761), p. 13.

Clementi plays well when it comes to right-hand execution. His strength lies in passages in thirds. Incidentally, he has not a bit of feeling [gefühl] nor taste [geschmack] whatsoever. In a word, he is merely a *mechanicus*.⁵⁴

Mozart's oft-quoted jab at Clementi—praising his great facility while dismissing him as a mere *mechanicus*—crystallizes a long-running eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century anxiety in delivery: dazzling technical display without expressing inward feeling or taste. The image is of an automaton that executes difficulties impeccably yet remains psychologically uninvolved.

In essence, the underlying message of Mozart's statement could be that technical proficiency alone, devoid of feeling, psychological investment, and a sensitivity to shaping what one creates, is inexcusable for a good musician. Good delivery requires the union of both. Other authors of the period stressed the importance of an expressive delivery that transcends mere technical precision. "Mediocre works," says Türk in his *Clavierschule* (1789), "can be uncommonly improved by a good and expressive execution, and on the contrary, the most moving Adagio, poorly executed, loses almost all of its effect, or even provokes unpleasant feelings."⁵⁵ What did Türk mean by a good execution? For Türk, a performer "even with all his facility in reading notes and in playing" will fail if he does not attain "his main purpose, which is to move the heart of his listener."⁵⁶ In the early nineteenth century, Mozart's pupil, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, summarized this discourse with clear distinctions. In his *Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel* (1827), Hummel distinguishes two components in delivery (*Vortrag*): the "correct" (*richtigen*) and the "beautiful" (*schönen*). For Hummel, the "correct" referred to the standard technical execution of notes and signs. By the "*schönen*," Hummel referred to "feeling," or sentimental engagement. The musician only reaches their full potential when they achieve the beautiful through expressing inner feelings. The performer here feels the emotions which the composer has expressed in their score, adding a subjective layer to the objective features of mere "correctness."⁵⁷

In this sense, Hummel's ideal performer mediates between the external and internal dimensions of musical practice; between "correctness" and "feeling," or even between objectivity and subjectivity. Here, the "external" refers to those objective or semi-objective features grounded in the musical text, technical execution, and stylistic convention. This may include notation, rhythm, harmony, articulation, fingering, tempo relations, formal design, rhetorical figures, and other commonplaces of expression. They are objective insofar as they can be described, taught, and assessed according to shared standards

⁵⁴ der Clementi spielt gut, wen es auf *execution* der rechten hand ankömt. – seine *force* sind die terzen *Passagen* – übrigens hat er um keinen kreützer gefühl oder geschmack. mit einem Wort ein blosser *Mechanicus*. Wolfgang Amadé Mozart, 'Wolfgang Amadé Mozart an Leopold Mozart in Salzburg, Wien, 12. Januar 1782' (Bauer/Deutsch Nr. 657), *Mozart Letters and Documents – Online Edition* (Digital Mozart Edition), Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg / Packard Humanities Institute; Accessed 24 January 2026, <https://dme.mozarteum.at/DME/briefe/letter.php?cat=&mid=1223>.

⁵⁵ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 322.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, Part III, "Zweiter Abschnitt. Erstes Kapitel. Vom Vortrage überhaupt," §1, p. 426.

of correctness. The “internal,” by contrast, refers to the performer’s subjective engagement with these materials. Namely, this includes the inner feeling, sensibility, imagination, and mental animation through which the expressive content of the music is apprehended and made one’s own. In Hummel’s estimation, a “good” performance emerges when these two dimensions are joined, so that objective musical order is animated by subjective feeling, while subjective expression remains disciplined by the objective demands of text, technique, and style.

Echoes of the distinction between “correctness” and “feeling” in delivery are found in the sentimentalist acting theories of the time. Lessing makes a similar distinction when writing about the delivery of the actor:

There is a tremendous gulf between the actor who merely understands a passage and one who also feels it! Words, the meaning of which one has grasped and which one has committed to memory, can be recited quite correctly, even if one’s attention is preoccupied with entirely different things; but there will be no possibility of deep feeling. The spirit must be entirely present; it must direct its attention solely and entirely to its speech, and only then—⁵⁸

Lessing underscores that mere words correctly recited without inner feeling behind them will fail to produce the deeply moving feelings the actor should aim to elicit in the audience. Hence, much like Mozart, C.P.E. Bach, Türk, Beethoven, and Hummel, Lessing positions genuine, or personally authentic inner feeling as an indispensable component of the orator’s delivery. Read together, these “correct” prescriptions supply the disciplined grammatical foundation of a performer’s execution, while inward feeling offers a more spontaneous engine of expressive *pathos*.

In this view, how should the effective actor or musician imbue their technical facility with feeling in delivery? Hummel contends that genuine feeling can be “awakened, educated, elevated and refined, but not actually taught.”⁵⁹ As a result, he states that his treatise will concentrate on “correctness:” the trainable, ‘objective’ mechanical side of delivery. This side of music-making, which is often found in musical performance treatises of the period is the very content that the HIP movement has been criticized for exhibiting an ideological bias towards (see the introduction). However, the more elusive cultivation of “feeling” is no less important, even if Hummel thought it was very difficult to teach to students and was only born of “genius” and “intuition.” But while Hummel may have left the awakening of genuine feelings to instinct and talent, sentimental acting manuals of the period sought to bridge this gap, as will be shown in Chapter 4.2. Regardless of whether they would have been considered successful in Hummel’s estimation, these manuals furnish techniques for stirring the passions within

⁵⁸ Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3; 8 May 1767, §8.

⁵⁹ geweckt, gebildet, erhöht und verfeinert, aber nicht eigentlich gelehrt ... Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, Part III, “Zweiter Abschnitt. Erstes Kapitel. Vom Vortrage überhaupt,” §1, p. 426.

the performer—through imaginative identification, controlled excitation, and the practices of sentimental acting—so that inward feeling animates outward delivery. A predisposition towards feeling certainly required a degree of natural ability, but the cultivation of this ability is certainly important for actors and musicians alike.

Following from these reflections, rhetorical *actio* may be understood as the real-time coupling of correctness and feeling by which affect is generated—a coupling between “external” objective features and internal “feeling,” which is a subjective component. In this study, “external” features are defined as the objective, given elements that can be specified, transmitted, or notated in advance. In poetry, for example, the words themselves are fixed in the text, as are often the punctuation marks. In music, the written pitches, harmonies, rhythms, and other symbols on the page function in the same way: they are materially present before performance and, in that sense, prescribed. However, the prescribed extends beyond the bare text or notation. It also includes conventions of prescriptive execution that govern how that text or notation is to be delivered in practice. These conventions can be understood in three broad areas: poetic prescriptions, musical prescriptions, and shared rhetorical prescriptions. In poetry, the written text does not merely determine which words are spoken; it can also prescribe elements of delivery. Punctuation in declamatory practice, for instance, indicates pause, cadence, and inflection in recitation, and therefore already anticipates breath, pacing, and melodic contour in speech (as discussed by Walker, explored more in Chapter 7.3). In music, the notation likewise includes signs and markings that carry an implied manner of execution: slurs, appoggiaturas, trills, rests, accent marks, dynamic indications, pedaling marks, other articulation marks, tempo indications, and similar devices. In addition, sources established stylistic techniques such as fingering, pedaling, and articulation when marks are not present. Finally, there are shared rhetorical features that span both spoken and musical performance. This includes commonplaces like stylistic conventions, conventionalized ways of depicting the “natural signs” of emotion, recognizable topoi, and the prescriptive delivery of rhetorical figures.

All together, these poetic, musical, and rhetorical prescriptions form the “external” layer of *actio*. Correctness is achieved when these externals are observed, so that the expression remains intelligible and publicly legible. Feeling is then taken as the psychological, inward, embodied imagination which inhabits and sometimes modifies the external features, working between them—intuitive rhetorical timing, shading, timbre, agogic “breath,” etc.—through which the “correct” scaffold is animated. In delivery, rhetorical strategies are used as the mediating link by which external cues are converted into subjective experience and, in turn, made shareable or intersubjective.

In this sense, rhetorical delivery requires a psychological component. Standard musicological notions of style often only consider external elements; thus, it is often presumed that musical

communication is secured by their correct arrangement and lucid presentation of signs.⁶⁰ However, this presumption is arguably insufficient, as features of a performer's expression are not all fixed by external features. While semiotics would describe this process as the recognition of signs that point to coded meanings, theorists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century insist that such signs only fulfill their function when they do not merely denote an emotion but awaken it as a felt, shared experience. As Du Bos noted in his writings on aesthetics in 1719:

The sublime nature of poetry and painting is to touch and please, just as that of eloquence is to persuade. It is not enough for our verses to be beautiful [...] they must also be able to stir the heart and give rise to the feelings they seek to excite.⁶¹

Throughout this study, the standard notion of a purely semiotic musical communication will be challenged via the exploration of the notion of a sympathetic stirring of emotions between performer and listener. In the alternative model proposed, aesthetic experience depends also on how inward sentiment is allowed to seize those externals so that credibility of feeling is produced. Sympathetic recognition of sentiments is likewise holistic: emotions are often grasped as affective atmospheres rather than by analytic identification of discrete signs. Grief expressed in music, for example, may be recognized without explicit awareness of the precise tonality, dissonant harmonies, or melodic motions. On the other hand, the presence of such devices may be noted without any affect being felt. The music's effect arises not merely from the identification of commonplaces, but also from the "feeling" and "savouring" of them by both performer and audience: the experience of a shared affective interaction.

This conversion can be illustrated. In this late Enlightenment mindset, poetic verse does not draw its force only from the listener's understanding of the words in isolation. Its power greatly depends on delivery: the verse should be spoken in a way that realizes the emotional colours behind the ideas, making full use of its musical features—rhythm, stress, pacing, timing of pauses, rise and fall of emphasis, and the hierarchy of syllables and beats. The affect is generated not only by *what* is said, but also by *how* it was said; by how it was declaimed. This process is also psychological. The declaimer's imagination, upon reading the words and apprehending the sentiments expressed by them, is expected to supply genuine feeling, to summon the passion appropriate to the situation of the character, and to let that feeling inhabit the voice and body without hindrance. That inward sentiment then governs the outward choices: it guides which words are leaned on, where the breath is suspended, how quickly or broadly the rhythm moves, how sharply a consonant is struck or how tenderly a vowel is sustained. In

⁶⁰ Robert Pascall, "Style", *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.
<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027041>.

⁶¹ Le sublime de la Poësie & de la Peinture est de toucher & de plaire, comme celui de l'Eloquence est de persuader. Il ne suffit pas que nos Vers soient beaux [...] il faut encore que ces Vers puissent remuer les Cœurs, & qu'ils soient capables d'y faire naître les Sentimens qu'ils prétendent exciter. Du Bos, "Du génie en general", *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, vol. 1, Seconde Partie, Sect. I, p. 1.

other words, effective declamation is neither arbitrary decoration of the text nor cold application of some conventionalized modes of delivery that mimic the natural signs of emotions. Instead, it is steered by inwardly felt emotion toward the most suitable, convincing solution in sound. Real sentiment animates technique, and technique gives that sentiment communicable form.

To take some musical examples, a dissonant harmony is, externally, a physical phenomenon: a ratio of frequencies produced by interacting sound waves. It is possible—though not yet demonstrable—that certain rough or beating frequency ratios trigger a universal primal, physiological response in the listener, something like an instinctive flinch. Even if that is true, such a response alone does not account for how dissonance is actually received in historical style. As eighteenth-century musical theorists like Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart contend,⁶² dissonance is not merely heard; it is felt as perturbation, unrest, even pain. That meaning arises when the harmony is given rhetorical treatment in performance: when it is weighted, timed, sustained, intensified, or delayed in its resolution so that the disturbance is allowed to impress itself on the body. In other words, the raw acoustical fact (something external and objective) becomes an expressive affect through delivery—through how it is placed, lingered on, and relieved. Similarly, melodic intervals within eighteenth-century discourse were assigned typical responses (e.g., in Mattheson, “contracted” stepwise falls as sighs and complaint; “expounded” leaps as agility, exaltation: see the appendix), yet such responses are realized only when voicing and pace permit the convention to be experienced rather than merely identified. Likewise, F-sharp minor was frequently catalogued as a key of despair and extreme sorrow (see the appendix); however, acquaintance with the lexicon does not predetermine its sentimental experience. The affectivity is produced only when the tonality is understood, felt, and shared. This is where rhetoric does its work. A written forte-piano dynamic marking, more than simply an indication of volume, can be realized as a gasp (*exclamatio*). A seemingly simple galant melody may look banal on the page, yet the imagination can transform it into a realm of enchantment—true “noble simplicity,” full of *charme* and *douceur tendre* approaching the sublime—if its pacing, inflection, respiration, and resonance are shaped to let it sigh, plead, and bloom. Even neutral notations—rests, repeats, fermatas—become rhetorical turns: a rest can be hesitation, shock, or invitation; a repeat can be recollection or intensification; and a fermata can even become a cheeky wink to the audience.

Accordingly, *actio*, could be described as a continual calibration among the objective text and techniques, psychosomatic processes, and the contingencies of instrument, space, and audience (*kairos*). By correctness, private impulses are rendered communicable; by feeling, shared conventions are prevented from becoming empty. The desired outcome is affect that is stylistically grounded (communicable) yet unmistakably individual: not idiosyncrasy against the text, but the text realized as the performer’s own living idea—a ground on which the “feeling musician” is to be situated (see

⁶² See Chapter 5.1.

Chapter 4.3). Rhetoric aims at communicability—at intersubjectivity. In eighteenth-century aesthetic psychological terms, it operates through sensibility (individual responsiveness to emotion) and taste (a community's sense of fitness and propriety), mediating between what is fixed and what is felt so that technique is not merely mechanical, but alive. As will be illustrated in Chapter 5, artistic genius in this period was understood not as wild and chaotic rhapsodizing, divorced from form, but as the capacity to channel spontaneous inspiration through a structured framework guided by reason and taste.

Hence, this proposed rhetorical framework offers a lens through which the musicologist and the performer can reimagine eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music as a form of musical oration. As opposed to treating rhetoric as a fixed historical concept, this approach integrates its core processes into the living practice of performance, aligning structure, affect, and intention with the dynamic feedback between performer and audience. The remaining chapters in Part I trace how this mediating function is described and taught in the period.

2. The Age of Sense, Sensibility, and the Sublime

That it may be questioned whether those are properly men, who never wept upon any occasion
[...] What can be more nobly human than to have a tender sentimental feeling of our own and
others' misfortunes?

Peter Shaw, *Man: A Paper for Ennobling the Species* (1755)

This chapter will provide an overview of the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility and establish key concepts that will later connect music to the sentimental. Sensibility, with its emphasis on refined emotional responsiveness and moral perception, informed not only how performers crafted and delivered their expressions but also how those expressions were received and evaluated by audiences.

Scholars of eighteenth-century studies recognize the “Age of Sensibility” or *Empfindsamkeit*, as a cultural phenomenon which spanned roughly 1740–1800, characterized by some as an era of proto-Romanticism, where consciousness of emotion and susceptibility to its effects received a central focus in intellectual culture. As John Brewster puts it, “for much of the second half of the eighteenth century the language of feeling, with its key terms of sentiment, sympathy and sensibility, was central to the discussion of man and society, manners, ethics and aesthetics.”¹ Emerging discourses in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries about moral sense and an increasingly sophisticated “emotional psychology” of mind offered frameworks for understanding how perception, sentiment, and judgment interacted.² By the mid-eighteenth century, emotions were no longer viewed as obstacles to reason which needed to be overruled; rather, the emotions were an integral component of the human psychology that was essential to human experience, and observable through empirical means and sensory perception. Perception, in turn, triggered responses to the senses, guiding moral judgments about the external world and other subjects.³ As Patricia Meyer Spacks notes, sensibility “provided a context for registering and discussing the experienced relation between self and others”; a context that was “connected with established virtues” and “justified emotional expansiveness while permitting the

¹ John Brewster, “Sentiment and Sensibility”, *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*. Ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 19.

² According to Amy Schmitter, in studies of human physiology, a shift from Galenic humours to nerves occurred in the mid-seventeenth century. Namely, she notes that Descartes re-interpreted the animal spirits from Galenic physiology as “simply fine and lively parts of the blood, rarified by the heart and brain, and passing through the brain to the nerves and then to the muscles to produce bodily motions.” The spirits are thus conveyed through nerves. Amy M. Schmitter, “Descartes on the Emotions”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), ed. N. Zalta, §5. Accessed 3 January 2026. <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD2Descartes.html>.

³ For further reading, see Carl Koch, “Schools and Movements”, *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*. Ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 49.

claim of rationality.”⁴ The rise of sentimental terminology and concepts laid the groundwork for Romanticism, as it emerged during the 1770s and flourished through 1830.⁵

While stylistic and thematic transformations occurred throughout the entire eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the culture of feeling remained a point of continuity.⁶ Sentimentalism valorized the “feeling man” whose susceptibility and responsiveness to sentiment was perceived as an index of a person’s capacity for virtuous action and moral judgment. Questions of sentiment also guided artists at every stage, from initial conception to production, and from interpretation to audience reception. At the same time, arguably, this culture of sensibility is best understood in terms of continuity rather than rupture with the seventeenth or nineteenth century. It did not introduce a wholly new way of feeling emotions, but rather, new ways of conceptualizing, interpreting, and writing about them. This discourse intensified the period’s focus on feeling without positing a different human nervous system.

The age of sensibility is a highly complex historical, cultural, and social phenomenon that often resists generalization and defies reductive summary. Nevertheless, within the context of this study, sensibility provided the emotional vocabulary and expectations that governed taste, enabling artistic performers to communicate affect with subtlety, sincerity, and decorum. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to establish working definitions of core terms—sentiment, sympathy, sensibility, feeling, the Sublime, and taste—that will underpin their use throughout the study. Clarifying these concepts will help unlock what eighteenth-century aestheticians and musicians meant when they deployed such language, and it will offer the modern surveyor a way of understanding the psychosomatic processes that eighteenth-century bodies experienced and theorized. As such, sensibility serves both as a guiding principle and a feedback mechanism within the rhetorical process, ensuring expressive coherence between intention, structure, embodied delivery, and audience perception.

2.1 Key Concepts in the Aesthetics of Sensibility

Sensibility, according to Spacks, “always involves emotion, and it always entails willingness and ability to respond to others.”⁷ The 1773 edition of Samuel Johnson’s English dictionary gives two main definitions for sensibility: a “quickness of sensation” and a “quickness of perception, delicacy.”⁸ Complementarily, the *Monthly Magazine* in 1796 described sensibility as “that peculiar structure, or habitude of mind, which disposes a man to be easily moved, and powerfully affected, by surrounding

⁴ Patricia Meyer Spacks, “The Poetry of Sensibility”, *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 252.

⁵ For a discussion on the boundary dates of literary Romanticism, see James Chandler, “Introduction”, *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 1–18.

⁶ Spacks, “The Poetry of Sensibility”, p. 249.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Sensibility, n.s.”, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, by Samuel Johnson, 1773. Accessed 24 September 2025. https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/1773/sensibility_ns.

objects and passing events.”⁹ Diderot saw it as the tender and delicate disposition of the soul which renders it easy to be moved.¹⁰

Furthermore, sensibility involves sensitivity or susceptibility to emotional experiences or sentiments triggered by objects, events, and other persons as they are perceived. During the eighteenth century, advancements in scientific theories of human physiology provided a material basis for understanding the localization of sensibility within the body. As McGillivray notes, “it was believed that the physiologically sensitive person was predisposed to sentimentality and to virtue.”¹¹ Findings, as articulated in Willis’s *Essay of the Pathology of the Brain and Nervous Stock* (1667), localized sensitivity to the quality of the nervous system’s transmission of signals from the brain to the muscles of the body via the animal spirits. Thus, it was believed that cultivation, virtue, and artistic genius, all highly dependent on potent sensibility, were linked to human physiology. Similarly, emotional expression through the body was possible in part because of the body’s ability to feel emotions deeply. Consequently, this anatomical theory led to the conclusion that women were more sensitive than men due to their finer nerves and, therefore, were more naturally predisposed to virtue than men, but also emotional instability.¹²

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophers inherited from Aristotle a notion of passions (emotions) as movements arising from sensory perception: they result from the mind’s apprehension and reflection on a perceived or imagined stimulus, accompanied by bodily agitations that are valenced (in the psychological sense) towards pleasure or pain.¹³ For the eighteenth-century philosopher, who increasingly regarded sensibility as an empirically measurable physiological phenomenon, *sentiment* was the felt response to emotion. Moreover, it is the embodied experience of emotion—the individual’s lived experience of a passion, leaving an impression on both mind and body.¹⁴ For example, in Frances Hutcheson’s Aristotelian account of the passions given in his *Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (1728), passions result from perception. They are contingent on “apprehension” or reflection by the mind of an object or event perceived through the senses. As Hutcheson proposes, they are “those Modifications or Actions of the mind consequent on the Apprehension of certain Objects or Events in which the Mind generally conceives Good or Evil.”¹⁵ Passions can also be produced by impressions of objects or events conceived in the imagination, as a psychological experience, including

⁹ *The Monthly Magazine* 2:706 (October 1796).

¹⁰ Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d’Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. XV (Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton, and Durand, 1765), p. 38.

¹¹ Glen McGillivray, “‘Suiting Forms to their Conceit’: Emotion and Convention in Eighteenth-century Tragic Acting”, *Theatre Survey* 59/2 (2018), p. 179.

¹² McGillivray, “‘Suiting Forms to their Conceit,’” p. 179.

¹³ Amy M. Schmitter, “17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions”, Accessed 4 November 2025. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/emotions-17th18th/>.

¹⁴ Schmitter, “17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions”.

¹⁵ Frances Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections* (London: Sold by J. Osborn and T. Longman, 1728), p. 15.

“perceptions of Pleasure or Pain, not directly raised by the Presence or Operation of the Event or Object, but by our Reflection upon or Apprehension of their present or certainly future Existence; so that we are sure that the Object or Event will raise the direct Sensations in us.”¹⁶ Thus, passions are associated with both mental and bodily experience. Hutcheson notes both, as they produce “Sensation either of Pleasure or Pain, occasioned or attended by some violent bodily Motions” all the while keeping “the Mind much employed upon the present Affair, to the exclusion of everything else,” which “prolongs or strengthens the Affection sometimes to such a degree, as to prevent all deliberate Reasoning about our Conduct.”¹⁷ Such strong passions can therefore overrule rational deliberation, taking the mind and body out of its natural composure and subjecting it to an intensive agitation. Hutcheson’s account, therefore, serves as an example of a period refutation against the notion of “rationalized affects.”

Within this empiricist and physiological framework, the sensation or psychosomatic experience of emotion itself acquires epistemic weight: it becomes the basis on which moral and aesthetic evaluations are formed. This development helps explain why eighteenth-century rhetorical and aesthetic discourse increasingly turns to the language of sentiment to describe the lived experience of emotion. Nevertheless, this study will employ the terms “passion” and “sentiment” somewhat interchangeably, in keeping with eighteenth-century usage, while emphasizing “sentiment” when referring to the embodied registration of a passion in a sensitive, feeling subject.

Sympathy was the mechanism that rendered subjective feeling intersubjective. As Hume observes, “no quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own.”¹⁸ For Hume, sympathy is a natural tendency to resonate emotionally with others: it is the process by which passions are communicated from one person to another, like fire leaping from heart to heart and igniting a shared state of feeling. Rather than replacing earlier accounts of passion, this notion of sympathy explains how individual emotions can propagate within a social field and become a basis for moral judgment.

In this context, sympathy—often associated with benevolence and compassion—was increasingly seen as a principle that could guide human action toward moral behaviour. For Diderot, this capacity was a source of morality, giving individuals a sort of wisdom that concerned matters of virtue that is far more penetrating than the intellect acting on its own.¹⁹ Similarly, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), Adam Smith treats sympathy as the mechanism by which individuals come to resonate with the emotions of others through imaginative projection. Since individuals have no direct

¹⁶ Hutcheson, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, p. 30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁸ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Section xi, ‘Of the Love of Fame’.

¹⁹ Diderot, *Encyclopédie*, vol. XV, p. 38.

access to another's sensations, "it is by the imagination only" that they form any idea of what they feel. This occurs by mentally placing ourselves in the other's situation, reproducing in ourselves an analogue of the other's passion. Smith's "sympathetic imagination" thus names a process in which individuals actively use their own imaginations to conceive what they would feel in the place of another and adjust their response accordingly, effectively calling forth the objects and events that would produce those same sentiments.²⁰ Within this sentimental framework, sympathy becomes a powerful engine of social and moral reform. Because sensibility renders others' suffering experientially present, it makes cruelty and injustice more difficult to ignore. As Spacks notes, the "injustices of slavery, the brutalities of the penal system, and the suffering of the poor all attracted increasing attention."²¹ In Brewster's view, sensibility came to be "figured as virtuous, social, modern, youthful and feminine," even as it was also pathologized by the very forces—modernity, politeness, good taste, sociability, commerce, feminization—that produced it.²²

Thus, sympathy, enabled by sensibility, functions as the primary channel through which sentiments are transmitted from one person to another. As Smith further observes, on some occasions passions "seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously and antecedent to any knowledge of what excited them," so that emotion appears to spread before reflective understanding can intervene.²³ For Smith, then, sympathetic resonance can be both imaginatively mediated and quasi-instantaneous, operating beneath or alongside explicit reasoning. This shared intersubjective capacity is also the driving force behind expressive communication in the performing arts. Lessing famously described the performer's "fire": the visible and audible intensity of felt emotion that, when sufficiently strong, spreads and "inflames" the audience.²⁴ The rhetorical performer's perceived *pathos*—the internal "fire" of feeling embodied in voice, face, gesture, and musical delivery—acts as a demonstration capable of awakening corresponding sentiments in listeners. Through sympathetic imagination, audiences are prompted to mirror and share the emotions they perceive, forging a bond of shared sentiment that lies at the heart of eighteenth-century theories of interpretation, performance, and reception.

Because of its prominent status in eighteenth-century society, performatively legible sensibility signalling became more prevalent. "The key physical sign of sensibility," says Brewster, "a spontaneous lachrymosity – also became a sign of humanity."²⁵ Accounts of intensive, and sometimes excessive sensibility—encouraged by society—were deemed fashionable signs of nobility, virtue, and civility.

²⁰ Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: T. Longman, 1759), p. 2.

²¹ Spacks, "The Poetry of Sensibility", p. 250.

²² Brewster, "Sentiment and Sensibility", p. 28.

²³ Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 5.

²⁴ See Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 5, §13, 15 May 1767.

²⁵ Brewster, "Sentiment and Sensibility", p. 29.

Lady Bradshaigh, writing to the author, Samuel Richardson as she finished reading his novel: *Clarissa; or, The History of a Young Lady* (1748), exclaimed:

I verily believe I have shed a pint of tears, and my heart is still bursting, tho' they cease not to flow at this moment, nor will, I fear, for some time ... in agonies would I lay down the book, take it up again, walk about the room, let fall a flood of tears, wipe my eyes, read again, perhaps not three lines, throw away the book, crying out, excuse me, good Mr. Richardson, I cannot go on.²⁶

Scholars of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century musical culture have increasingly also highlighted the phenomenon of collective weeping as a central marker of sensibility. Isabella van Elferen has described how “intersubjective tears” in the *Empfindsamkeit* concert scene were not merely spontaneous but functioned as socially legible performances of shared feeling, binding audiences together sympathetically through audible and visible signs of affective receptivity.²⁷ This emphasis on emotional immediacy also resonates with David Rowland’s survey of British diaries and letters between 1780 and 1830, where listeners repeatedly recorded their own tears as evidence of music’s power to stir the passions.²⁸ Such accounts place musical reception within the wider culture of sensibility, where sympathetic tears were prized indicators of moral refinement. By foregrounding these embodied responses, the literature suggests that musical performance and reception were integral to broader sentimental culture of the age: a site in which aesthetic experience intersected with moral and social ideals.

2.2 Sensibility and Rhetorical Expression

Within this aesthetic psychology, the notion of a musician of sensibility—the “feeling” musician—emerges inevitably: a notion central to this present study that will be explored throughout. Such a musician is a sensitive, embodied subject who cannot, by definition, be detached, cold, “objective,” or emotionally distant from the very states they seek to express, in contrast to many (post)modern ideals of neutral delivery. Feeling musicians ground their creative work and interpretive choices in their own sensibility: through imagination and embodied delivery. They set up a continual circuit between inner feeling and outward expression, drawing on their capacity to be moved and to register sentiments in order to shape their delivery. The feeling musician fosters emotional immediacy and a sympathetic bond with the audience; features that stand at the centre of artistic discourse in this culture of sensibility.

As various eighteenth-century writers note, sensibility was crucial for the effective artist: not an enigmatic fancy, but a faculty that could be shaped by taste in a manner that made feeling legible

²⁶ Lady Bradshaigh to Samuel Richardson, 6–11 January 1749, in *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson*, ed. Anna Laetitia Barbauld, vol. 4 (London: R. Phillips, 1804), pp. 240–41.

²⁷ Isabella van Elferen, “Ihr Augen weint!” Intersubjective tears in the sentimental concert hall”, *Understanding Bach*, 2(1) (2007), pp. 77–94.

²⁸ David Rowland, “British Listeners c. 1780–1830”, *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 17, no. 3 (2020), pp. 359–79.

and shareable to others. As Spacks notes, the “ability both to suffer and to articulate one’s suffering belongs only to the sensitive, and sensitivity defines the protagonists of sensibility, in poetry and prose alike.”²⁹ For poets, actors, or musicians, sensibility was essential, as it predisposed the imagination to the very emotions they sought to express, thereby enabling them to discover appropriate means of expressing them. Moreover, performers intensely affected by emotions would be able to inflame audiences with corresponding passions. The need for artists to possess sensibility was identified, for instance, by Alexander Gerard in his *Essay on Taste* (1759): the artist required “such a sensibility of heart, as fits a man for being easily moved, and for readily catching, as by infection, any passion, that a work is fitted to excite.”³⁰ Similarly, Gerard wrote in his later *Essay on Genius* (1774) that, for the artistic mind, sensibility is necessary for the “perfection” of taste, as it “makes a person feel strongly every beauty or blemish which he perceives.” One lacking sensibility could never have a “lively imagination,” for all that it produced would be “frigid and spiritless,” since “no object could make an impression sufficient to give it a brisk and active motion.”³¹ Sensibility, then, not only helped the artist create; it also enabled the audience to appreciate artworks: a sensitive audience whose imagination is easily “inflamed” by the “passion that a work is fitted to excite” will feel those elevated psychosomatic experiences and the catharsis which Aristotle recommended.³²

Circling back to Mozart’s jab at Clementi’s playing,³³ Mozart’s complaint that Clementi lacked feeling can be read against the backdrop of sensibility as a criticism of perceived immediacy and responsiveness: Clementi, for Mozart, did not seem to be inwardly affected in the act of playing, and thus Clementi did not let shifting sentiments register in the outward external features of performance he created. In this interpretation, the problem is about communication: Clementi’s delivery failed (for Mozart) to project the immediate, sympathetic animation that eighteenth-century discourse associated with true sensibility. Mozart may, of course, have been motivated by rivalry in this dismissal; yet whatever its personal impetus, the report he sends to his father remains revealing as evidence of a shared evaluative vocabulary that parallels the broader aesthetics of sensibility.

This evaluative language is not idiosyncratic to Mozart but draws on a wider sentimental discourse that offered a psychological and aesthetic account of how inner feeling becomes publicly intelligible. Sentimentalism often provided a psychological and aesthetic vocabulary for explaining how an inner feeling could be made intersubjective. They presuppose a coupling between “external” objective features (musical and emotional *topoi*) and an “internal” subjective component (the felt sentiment “of the soul”). In this view, expression is not a purely rational coding of pre-defined affects onto musical or figures, as in later (post)modern “rational affectivity” readings of the period. Rather, in

²⁹ Spacks, “The Poetry of Sensibility”, p. 257.

³⁰ Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (Edinburgh: A. Millar & A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1764), p. 81.

³¹ Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1774), p. 406.

³² Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 406.

³³ See Chapter 1.4.

this view, sensibility is indispensable because it keeps artists in contact with what is being expressed and renders them susceptible. Their own inner feelings are allowed to register in, and pass through, the body if they are to become outwardly legible.

This ideal of artistic sensibility can be illustrated by a notable literary context from the period. This can be illustrated in a conversation from Volume I, Chapter 3 of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811): a central source in studies of eighteenth-century culture. The character Marianne Dashwood—herself described as a person of potent sensibility—laments to her mother that her sister Elinor's flame, Edward, is lacking conviction and deeper experience due to a deficiency in sensibility. Though she acknowledges his amiability, she finds him wanting in grace, passion, and artistic sensitivity. His indifferent response to music and art, and particularly his flat declamation of Cowper, reveal to her a deficiency in what she calls "real taste" and "sensibility": Edward, she complains, recites "with such impenetrable calmness, such dreadful indifference!"³⁴ For Marianne, a true man of feeling must not only appreciate the arts but respond to them with visible intensity—his emotions should be both deeply felt and outwardly expressed.

Crucially, Austen's scene dramatizes sensibility as the coupling mechanism between inner feeling and the outward expression of external features. To possess sensibility is not simply to have strong inner feeling, but to have an imaginative and bodily disposition in which inner sentiments immediately overflow into outward expression—tears, changes of voice, agitation, gestures, etc. Marianne herself, whose tears flow readily at music, poetry, or romantic disappointment, embodies this ideal of tight coupling: feeling and its outward manifestation are almost instantaneous, so that others may *see* what she feels. Conversely, Edward's sedate demeanour breaks this linkage. Because his speech, gesture, and vocal colour remain calm and uninflected, Marianne concludes that there is no corresponding inner fire; the absence of outward signs appears to her as evidence of an absence of inward sentiment.

Yet Austen later complicates this assumption. When Edward finally confesses his history and declares himself to Elinor near the close of the novel (Volume III, Chapter 13 / Chapter 49), it becomes clear that he has long harboured deep, steady feelings, combined with a powerful sense of duty and self-reproach. His problem is not the absence of inner sentiment but his inability—or refusal—to allow those sentiments to overflow into conspicuous bodily display. His "coupling" is weak: emotion tends to remain interior, encoded in restraint, moral constancy, and awkward silences rather than in weeping or rapturous exclamation. Edward may be morally admirable, but he is a poor "artist" of his own feelings: he lacks the capacity—or the willingness—to find and employ outward signs that would make his inner state legible to another. His insensibility in Marianne's sense does not mean that he feels nothing, but

³⁴ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Edward Copeland, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), vol. 1, ch. 3.

that he is chronically bad at communicating what he feels; his diffidence and reserve repeatedly prevent him from expressing himself clearly to Elinor, leaving her (and others) without the cues needed for sympathetic understanding. Marianne's initial judgment thus reveals her ideal of sensibility as a fusion of aesthetic taste and emotional transparency, but the narrative ultimately exposes the limitations of equating truth of feeling with immediate legibility. Sensibility still functions as the psychosomatic linkage through which inward feeling can become outwardly visible and available to sympathy, yet Austen reminds that this linkage may be strong, weak, or even deliberately moderated—and that exterior calm does not necessarily entail an empty interior, even if, in rhetorical terms, it makes for a singularly ineffective performer of sentiment. Likewise, an orator, or a musical performer who struggles in this way, or who falls back on affected mechanical or habitual expressive tendencies, will likely fail to reach lofty rhetorical ambitions.

More broadly, Marianne's excessive sensibility is admonished by Austen in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), and while Johann Wolfgang von Goethe endears us to his naively sensitive protagonist in *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774), Werther's sentimentally driven tendencies are inherently self-destructive. Laurence Sterne satirizes the sentimental travel journal while affirming it (with memorable sympathetic episodes like the genuinely moving encounter with Maria) in *A Sentimental Journey* (1768). But while devotion to sensibility sometimes sanctioned sentimental signalling, critics of sensibility raised questions about its authenticity. Sometimes it was deemed hysterical or histrionic; other times, like in the modern sense of the term "sentimental," it implied a sort of overwrought self-indulgence and exaggerated mode of emotional expression. Even more profound questions emerged regarding the authenticity of sensibility: what happens when the outward display of affectivity is de-coupled from genuine inner feeling? How can individuals distinguish genuine emotions from affectation, or the false presentation of inner feeling through outwardly performative actions, like Edward's foil, Willoughby, in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*? Could unscrupulous rhetoricians exploit false sentiments to manipulate others with feigned tears? These questions are explored further in Chapter 4: Rhetorical Delivery, Expressive Ideologies, Emotional Authenticity, and Modern Expressivity.

2.3 Romanticism and Arguing for Continuity of Sentimental Rhetorical Principles

The period 1770–1830 witnessed a transformation in Western art and literature: eighteenth-century sentimentalism evolved into Romanticism, bringing a marked shift in themes, styles, and ideas. Yet, as Benedict Taylor underscores, musical Romanticism does not perfectly coincide with Romanticism in literature or philosophy: "Romanticism as a historical-stylistic category is that it is largely non-coetaneous with the literary and philosophical movements going under that name."³⁵ While scholars

³⁵ Benedict Taylor, "Defining the Indefinable: Romanticism and Music", *The Cambridge Companion to Music and Romanticism*, ed. Benedict Taylor, Cambridge Companions to Music. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 7.

consider Romanticism to be largely over in literature and the visual arts by 1840, musicologists see this as its peak with composers like Chopin and the Schumann's. Nevertheless, within the scope of the present study—which considers music only up to 1830—early musical Romanticism can largely be seen in dialogue with its contemporary movements in the visual arts and literature. Moreover, many of the traits usually associated with Romanticism were anticipated by sentimentalist culture. Taylor identifies Romanticism as “denoted by an emphasis on emotion and subjective expression,”³⁶ but such a focus was already central within the culture of sensibility, epitomized already in the music and writings of C.P.E. Bach.

Taylor also observes that Romantic aesthetics shifted toward instinct and the ineffable over formalism: “Romantic aesthetics are generally distinct in emphasising music’s formalist aspects, or when based on emotional qualities, imbuing them with significantly greater metaphysical aspirations than the primarily physiological and ethical basis of earlier eighteenth-century viewpoints.”³⁷ Here again, however, continuity with earlier ambivalences emerges rather than disruption. The tension between art and nature, instinct and form, or the ineffable and the tangible, was already central to thought from the age of sensibility. Romanticism intensifies these paradoxes. However, even where Romantic discourse appears to drift toward mythic, quasi-intangible horizons—genius, the infinite, the absolute—it arguably largely preserves the older rhetorical premise that feeling must be made communicable and thus addressed to others. In this respect, the ideals of sensibility and communicable affect remain remarkably stable: what changes is less the underlying communicative *telos* than the perceived depth, scope, and metaphysical “reach” of what is being communicated.

In this view, major figures of Romanticism such as Beethoven and Goethe could be understood not as heralds of a rupture with the past, but as artists who combine the Enlightenment’s inherited ideals of system, form, and rhetorical structure with an intensified orientation toward imagination, inwardness, and the seemingly “transcendental” that later discourse labels Romantic. This points to a strong line of continuity: the rhetorical culture of sensibility had already made sentiment, sympathetic communication, and the productive powers of imagination central to artistic meaning, so arguably, the Romantic “novelty” lies less in the abandonment of structure than in the metaphysical enlargement of what that structure is asked to carry. Even where public Romanticism appears to signal an escape from reason—for example, figures like E.T.A. Hoffmann’s evocations of mythic and ineffable realms, for instance—his thinking still presupposes a rhetorical communicative logic in which feeling must be projected through signs and grasped by listeners; the “ineffable” is framed, guided, and made shareable rather than left as private “fog.” Likewise, in this perspective, Beethoven’s music would reach toward unprecedented intensities of longing, terror, or awe, yet it does so through forms and rhetorical strategies

³⁶ Taylor, “Defining the Indefinable: Romanticism and Music”, p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

inherited from his forebears: the late eighteenth-century musical language of sentiment is not discarded but re-energized, expanded, and pressed to new expressive ends. Framed this way, the argument of this study deliberately pushes against common scholarly narratives of abrupt epiphanies and self-contained “epochs”: rather than treating Romanticism as a break with classical rhetorical past, this study will treat it as a moment in which sentimental rhetoric persists as an underlying continuity, even when surface rhetoric proclaims the contrary.³⁸

Importantly in this view, to call Romantic sentiments ineffable arguably does not mean they become incommunicable, enigmatic, overly idiosyncratic, or solipsistic. Ineffability only suggests that these sentiments resist exact categorization. Sentiments remain sharable, expressible, and intersubjective, even if their boundaries blur. In fact, the increasing complexity of emotional taxonomies throughout the eighteenth century prepared the ground for such Romantic notions. Descartes had enumerated six “primitive passions” in *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649) (wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness, which combine in shades); by 1781, John Walker’s elocutionary manuals identified upwards of sixty passions and related sentiments. This proliferation of nuance demonstrates that emotions were becoming ever more finely distinguished, and thus harder to codify. This study argues that artistically, the so-called “ineffable” Romantic passions emerge from this trajectory—not as emotions beyond communication, but as the culmination of a culture that valued ever more subtle shades of affect. In this sense, Romanticism did not abolish affective taxonomy. Sentiment and affect remained at the heart of music. Where proponents of the earlier doctrine of the affections emphasized broad categories of passions like joy, grief, anger, or love, Romantic thinkers sought to express despair, longing, irony, or awe. Such developments suggest not the end of rhetorical frameworks but their continuation and evolution. Indeed, the very claim to ineffability can be read as a rhetorical stance—an intensified version of sensibility’s long-standing awareness that the most significant feelings exceed neat definition while still demanding persuasive and embodied communication.

2.4 The Sublime

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, writers frequently invoked “the Sublime,” which is central to the effect a musical orator should aim to produce in an audience. Already in antiquity, the anonymous first-century rhetorical treatise known as *Peri hypsous* (*On the Sublime*), attributed to Longinus, had defined the sublime as that quality in discourse which suddenly elevates the soul, producing transports rather than mere rational persuasion. Scholars Sarah Hibberd and Miranda Stanyon note that the sublime lay beyond “ordinary powers of comprehension,” and artistic invocations of it “use such extreme encounters to think beyond our normal limits and ground securer knowledge.”³⁹ Paraphrasing

³⁸ For further clarification on this methodological choice, see Introduction, pp. 22–26.

³⁹ Sarah Hibberd and Miranda Stanyon, “Sonorous Sublimes: An Introduction”, *Music and the Sonorous Sublime in European Culture, 1680–1880*, ed. Sarah Hibberd and Miranda Stanyon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), p. 3.

Longinus's view, they note that the sublime associated "grandeur of thought and vivid passions"⁴⁰ together with rhetorical skill. This section examines how the sublime was understood and received between 1740 and 1830, treating it not merely as an abstract aesthetic concept but as an experienced effect.

2.4.1 The Bolevian Sublime

In the seventeenth century, Nicolas Boileau produced a French translation of Longinus, *Traité du sublime ou du merveilleux dans le discours* (1674), which significantly re-interpreted the original. This publication, immediately popular and influential, reframed Longinus for a European readership and set the terms of much eighteenth-century debate.⁴¹ Boileau's interpretation of Longinus shifts the focus from affect to effect: as Barbara Warnick puts it, "whereas Longinus saw sublimity as originating both in conception and style, Boileau viewed the locus of the Sublime in the response of a hearer or reader of the text."⁴² From Boileau, French critics like Charles Rollin developed a largely rhetorical-critical sublime that served as a standard of elevated discourse, while in Britain the sublime was progressively psychologized and aestheticized, especially in the work of Edmund Burke and Hugh Blair. In Germany, Longinian and British influences mingled with Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy to yield more explicitly transcendental and Romantic treatments of the sublime (Kant's mathematical and dynamical sublime, Schiller's moral sublime, early Romantic reflections on awe and the infinite). Against this background of diverse interpretations, the present study adopts a specific line connecting Boileau, Burke, and Blair: it understands the sublime above all as a type of emotional-aesthetic experience, one that involves the whole psychosomatic being of the subject.

On this view, the Sublime names a particular mode of feeling: a mysterious, often ineffable state that Boileau already surrounds with the language of the *je ne sais quoi*—a "certain force" of somewhat ineffable nature that "ravishes, seizes, transports."⁴³ It is associated with awe, wonder, admiration, grandeur, and, especially in Burke's analysis, with fear, obscurity, and a kind of delightful terror before vast, powerful, or terrible objects: that which produces "not pleasure, but a sort of delightful horror, a sort of tranquility tinged with terror."⁴⁴ For Burke, in a psychologically oriented account, the sublime is tied to self-preservation and the passions of danger and astonishment; it works through the body—through tension, shudder, and physiological arousal—and thus belongs as much to a "nervous" psychology as to rhetoric or aesthetics. As the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy notes, Burke explicitly opposes this to the beautiful: the beautiful is what excites the "societal" passion of

⁴⁰ Hibberd and Stanyon, "Sonorous Sublimes: An Introduction", p. 5.

⁴¹ For further reading, see Barbara Warnick, "The Bolevian Sublime in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 8, no. 4 (1990), pp. 349–69.

⁴² Warnick, "The Bolevian Sublime in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory," p. 352.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁴⁴ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: printed for R. and J. Dodsley, Part II, Sect. VII, p. 130.

love, whereas the sublime excites the self-preservative passion of astonishment. In contrast to the Sublime, Beauty is associated with smallness, smoothness, clarity, and gentle pleasure. On this view, formal order and proportion may account for beauty, but they cannot on their own produce the sublime, which requires powerful inner emotion.⁴⁵

In his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (1783), and drawing on Boileau with direct citations, Blair systematically explores the affective sublime within rhetoric. Blair follows Burke closely: beauty, he argues, yields an emotion “of a calmer kind; more gentle and soothing; does not elevate the mind so much, but produces an agreeable serenity,” in contrast to sublimity’s more violent elevation, and he associates beauty with “regularity,” “proportion,” and “graceful variety” in figure rather than with terror or astonishment.⁴⁶ He asserts that the sublime is a distinct kind of impact on the mind and body of the audience that begins in the imagination of the writer. This impact elevates the soul above its ordinary state, infusing it with enthusiasm, surprise, and awe. Because Burke and Blair were widely translated and read across Europe, this affective, psychosomatic understanding of the sublime became one of the most influential accounts well into the nineteenth century.⁴⁷

The sentimental and Romantic concept of the Sublime, like its reception of ancient rhetoric, was an interpretation of ancient ideas extended and reframed by the Enlightenment. Modern scholars sometimes find it useful to distinguish between a “French” neo-classical sublime, associated with order, clarity, and grandeur of thought within a rhetorical–critical framework, and an “English” sublime, framed more generally as a psychological phenomenon linked to awe, obscurity, and overwhelming power.⁴⁸ For instance, musicologist Keith Chapin uses “French” and “English” sublimines as shorthand for two tendencies rather than rigid national types. The “French” sublime, exemplified by Boileau and French classicism, is, in Chapin’s terms, “centripetal:” it concentrates affect into brief, highly focused turns of phrase or tightly unified dramatic structures, producing transport with minimal, cohesive means: a form of ‘noble simplicity.’⁴⁹ Chapin’s “English” sublime is “centrifugal:” in Milton, Burke, and others it embraces luxuriant detail, sensory overload, terror, and vastness, treating the sublime as a more general psychological response to profusion and extremity.⁵⁰ Crucially, Chapin stresses that these are complementary poles, not mutually exclusive categories, and that eighteenth-century German critics routinely combine both in their theories and evaluations of music. As a heuristic, this can illuminate different emphases in reception; however, it is also somewhat anachronistic, since many eighteenth-century writers themselves—Blair is a prime example—freely combine both aspects in their conception

⁴⁵ For further reading, see James Shelley, “18th Century British Aesthetics”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2021 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2021/entries/aesthetics-18th-british>.

⁴⁶ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, I, pp. 93–95.

⁴⁷ Warnick, “The Bolevian Sublime in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory,” pp. 355–57.

⁴⁸ Chapin “C. P. E. Bach and the Neoclassical Sublime: Revisions of a Concept”, p. 91.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 92–95.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

of the Sublime. Blair treats the Sublime at once as a criterion for judging elevated discourse (very much in a Boileau-like, neo-classical mode) and as a powerful affective experience that seizes and transports the mind, aligning him just as much with the so-called English psychological sublime. In this light, the “French” and “English” designations mark not two distinct concepts, but two overlapping ways of framing a shared Bolevian (from Boileau) inheritance. For this reason, the present study will not insist on a strict French/English division; instead, it will treat the sublime throughout as an emotional experience in which grandeur of thought, clarity, and order coexist with awe, obscurity, and overwhelming affect.

The Sublime is closely linked to rhetorical delivery. Boileau emphasizes that the sublime is marked by intensity and brevity: it is sudden, powerful, irresistible, and cannot be sustained for long stretches without losing its force. It is also bound to what they call the sources of the Sublime: noble and grand conceptions, vehement passion, appropriate circumstances, and a certain simplicity and force of expression.⁵¹ The effect, when these conditions are met, is to sweep listeners out of their ordinary composure. Such notions were commonplace among rhetorical theorists and aestheticians of the period. For instance, James Burgh captures this in emphatically rhetorical terms in *The Art of Speaking* (1761):

True eloquence does not wait for cool *approbation*. Like irresistible *beauty*, it *transports*, it *ravishes*, it *commands* the *admiration* of all, who are within its reach. If it allows *time* to *criticise*, it is not *genuine*. It ought to *hurry* us out of ourselves, to *engage* and *swallow* up our whole *attention*; to *drive* every thing out of our *minds*, besides the *subject* it would hold forth, and the *point* it wants to *carry*. The hearer finds himself as *unable* to resist, as to blow out a *conflagration* with the *breath* of his mouth, or to *stop* the stream of a river with his *hand*. His *passions* are no longer *his own*. The *orator* has taken *possession* of them; and, with superior power, *works* them to whatever he *pleases*.⁵²

For Burgh, true eloquence does more than engage with reason: it is a powerful force which drives the emotions. Its auditors are never bored; it is endlessly engaging and swallows up the “whole *attention*.” Most importantly, it masters their passions. This focus on the orator’s mastery over the emotions of their auditors gives an impression of the intensity Burgh expected from a rhetorical delivery. What Burgh describes is the capacity of the orator to raise their auditors to sublime transports.

In this rhetorical–affective frame, the Sublime is often the aesthetic *telos* of the orator—and, by extension, of the musician as rhetorical performer—who seeks to transport listeners beyond their ordinary state. In twenty-first-century terms, a genuinely sublime moment may be likened to a “mic-drop”: a succinct, awe-inspiring utterance or gesture that abruptly stills the room, crystallizes something vast or otherwise inexpressible, and holds an audience in a shared suspension. It is not the product of

⁵¹ Warnick, “The Bolevian Sublime in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory”, p. 353.

⁵² James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking*, 7th edition. (London: Printed for T. Longman, T. Field, C. Dilly, W. Goldsmith, D. Ogilvy and J. Spear, 1792), p. 29.

extended argumentation or ornamental eloquence, but of a concentrated stroke that seizes the imagination and the feelings before critical reflection can intervene. It is comparable to the sudden “goosebump” scene in a film where the cinema falls silent; to an extreme-sports viral video in which a wingsuit flyer appears to flirt with catastrophe and induces vicarious physical tension in the viewer; to a brief video of a storm or volcanic eruption whose overwhelming scale renders the spectator momentarily speechless; or to the climactic instant of a live performance when a singer’s sustained high note or an ensemble’s final cadence elicits an involuntary collective roar or hush from the crowd. These modern experiences closely match the Bolevian description, suggesting that the basic structure of this feeling is still very much alive today.

Seen in this light, the notion of the sublime as the effect of oratory poses a challenge to (post)modern models of execution and “rational affectivity.” The very “ineffable” and overwhelming quality ascribed to the sublime by those in the Bolevian lineage resists being reduced to such a code: if Sublime discourse suspends discursive thought, ravishes attention, and transports auditor and performer alike, then its power cannot be fully accounted for by cataloguing figures or affect-labels. Likewise, the ideal of a performer who delivers with cool detachment—presenting the external features of the affects with “indifference” like Edward Ferrars reciting Cowper in Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*—is at odds with this vision of eighteenth-century art, which foregrounds a shared, ravishing aesthetic experience. Of course, not every eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century performance achieved such transport; the Sublime often functioned as an ideal. Yet contemporary accounts suggest that it was sometimes realised in practice: as Chapin has shown, critics praised C.P.E. Bach’s *Heilig* and related sacred works for a “sublime simplicity” in which many beauties are subsumed into a single, exalted effect that lifts listeners beyond ordinary devotion;⁵³ and E.T.A. Hoffmann famously describes Beethoven’s instrumental music as provoking Edmund Burke’s notions of the Sublime.⁵⁴

2.4.2 The Boundary between Art and Nature

At the centre of Boileau’s Sublime is the neoclassical notion of noble simplicity. As musicologist W. Dean Sutcliffe notes, noble simplicity lay at the forefront of Enlightenment thought. As Sutcliffe observes, “the most treasured category of expression was surely simplicity” and it “formed the centre of a collocation of terms that also included the clear, pure and natural.”⁵⁵ This stemmed from a belief that genuine, instinctive sentiment “in nature” expressed itself simply rather than in the learned, ornamental, or affectatious: a reaction against perceived past stylistic “excesses” and “frivolities.”

⁵³ Chapin “C. P. E. Bach and the Neoclassical Sublime: Revisions of a Concept,” pp. 108–16.

⁵⁴ Beethovens Musik bewegt die Hebel der Furcht, des Schauers, des Entsetzens, des Schmerzes und erweckt eben jene unendliche Sehnsucht, welche das Wesen der Romantik ist. Er ist daher ein rein romantischer Komponist.

E. T. A. Hoffmann, “Beethovens Instrumentalmusik”, in *Musikalische Novellen und Aufsätze*, Werden Verlag (München, 2005), pp. 1–2.

⁵⁵ W. Dean Sutcliffe, “Tone”, *Instrumental Music in an Age of Sociability: Haydn, Mozart and Friends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 434.

Consequently, Boileau explicitly distinguishes the Sublime from what was traditionally called the “sublime style.” The Sublime, he insists, is not simply an elevated manner of speaking with ostentatious words and ornate figures; it is a natural way of writing in which art and nature are so unified that the art becomes invisible. As Warnick puts it, in describing Boileau’s view, “the Sublime resulted when art and nature were so unified that art was hidden and invisible.”⁵⁶ This is what Felicity Baker describes in art as “Pygmalionism:” “the eighteenth-century criterion of aesthetic success being ‘its own abolition, its replacement by ‘the real thing.’”⁵⁷ As the scholar Magnus Tessing Schneider underscores, “it was through the very breakdown of organic unity and harmonious proportions that the unique beauty of the theatrical moment came into being.”⁵⁸ In Boileau’s view of the Sublime, for an orator in the moment of performance, all of that rhetorical art—the *topoi*, the structure of the discourse, the various figures within the design of the work, and the technical virtuosity of execution—must be transcended and made invisible: effortlessly delivered, holistically becoming “real” human experiences of sentiment at the moment of performance.

Various accounts of good performances in the eighteenth century employ this vocabulary of the merging of art and nature. In Fanny Burney’s *Evelina*, the fictional narrator describes the celebrated English actor David Garrick. Garrick’s performance, according to Burney, was electrifying because of the seamless fusion of art and nature—truly nature improved by art:

Such ease! such vivacity in his manner! such grace in his motions! such fire and meaning in his eyes!— I could hardly believe he had studied a written part, for every word seemed spoke from the impulse of the moment. His action—at once so graceful and so free!— his voice—so clear, so melodious, yet so wonderfully various in its tones—such animation!— every look speaks!⁵⁹

To Burney, Garrick’s genius lay in the impression of spontaneous, instinctual feeling—artifice so refined that it no longer appeared artificial. Such an acting style draws upon shared commonplaces, emotional and otherwise, as well as structured use of language, musically trained voice, and rhetorical figures. But these elements dissolve in performance and become sublime: the epitome of the Pygmalionist aesthetic ideal of the period.

A similar musical example is given by Fanny Burney’s father, Charles Burney. Hearing C.P.E. Bach’s performance at the keyboard in 1772, Burney described how certain long notes in the more pathetic slow movements transcended being mere notes: they became the “cry of sorrow and

⁵⁶ Warnick, “The Bolevian Sublime in Eighteenth-Century British Rhetorical Theory”, p. 355.

⁵⁷ Felicity Baker, *Don Giovanni’s Reasons: Thoughts on a Masterpiece*, ed. Magnus Tessing Schneider (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), p. 91.

⁵⁸ Magnus Tessing Schneider, “Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century: Theatrical Discourses, Practices, and Artefacts* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2023), p. 89.

⁵⁹ Frances Burney, *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World* (London: T. Lowndes, 1778), Letter X.

complaint.”⁶⁰ But Bach did not cry out in sorrow and complaint: he played a note—granted, wholly technical execution—but with such conviction that to Burney, it was no longer merely just a note: it became recognizably Sublime. Musical mimesis breaks down at this point; in the listener’s imagination, the boundary between representation and the represented collapses, and style becomes transparent to an underlying pathos that is deeply affecting.

On this account, mechanically applying style can become a danger: the pursuit of “correct,” “high” expressions, tropes, and figures risks degenerating into affectation, a mere display of artifice that imitates the external appearance of sublimity without the inner feeling that sustains it. As Blair notes, “spurious beauties, such as unnatural characters, forced sentiments, affected style, may please for a little,” but once it is shown “how nature might have been justly imitated or represented [...] the illusion will presently be dissipated, and the false beauties will please no more.”⁶¹ The Sublime, by contrast, does not consist in the conspicuous arrangement of external markers that signal loftiness; it issues from a powerful inner conception and passion that make themselves infectious. It presupposes a strong imagination endowed with sensibility, so that the mind naturally finds the most fitting and simple expression for a grand thought. In other words, external signs only rise to the level of the Sublime when they remain tightly coupled to an inward movement: when, as in C.P.E. Bach’s long note, technique is so suffused with intention that it no longer calls attention to itself as style or artifice, but is experienced as the direct emanation of feeling.

Blair illustrates this “noble simplicity” with Boileau’s celebrated example from Genesis:

“God said, let there be light; and there was light,”

This is striking and Sublime. [...]

“The Sovereign Arbiter of nature, by the potent energy of a single word, commanded the light to exist:”

[...] the style indeed is raised, but the thought is fallen. [...] The Sublime, indeed, rejects mean, low, or trivial expressions; but it is equally an enemy to such as are turgid.⁶²

Here, according to Blair, the unadorned biblical sentence, with its brevity and immediacy, produces a sublime effect; the expanded paraphrase, although more “elevated” in style, actually diminishes the thought’s magnitude and directness by making it pompous, ostentatious, and affected. For Blair, the conclusion is clear: the sublime “is not by hunting after tropes, and figures, and rhetorical assistances, that we can expect to produce it. No: it stands clear of these laboured refinements of art. It must come

⁶⁰ Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces* 2 vols. (London: for T. Becket and Co., J. Robson, and G. Robinson, 1773), vol. II, p. 269.

⁶¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 29.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

unsought, if come at all; and be the natural offspring of a strong imagination.”⁶³ He emphatically distinguishes the Sublime from the so-called ‘high style’ and identifies it instead with a simple, yet powerful expression ‘inspired’ by a great conception. The criterion of the Sublime lies not in cataloguing stylistic features but in the response it elicits, in which the mind is suddenly elevated and filled with enthusiasm, surprise, and awe.

Introducing the Bolevian Sublime in this study is therefore more than a terminological exercise: it sketches the *telos* of rhetorical delivery. In this view, the performer who aspires to sublimity should endeavour first to generate—or imaginatively summon—sublime ideas and feelings within, and then to couple these inner states to an outward expression capable of producing analogous elevation in others. The lines between art and nature should blur in this process: a direct result of the coupling between “natural” inner feeling and the external means to communicate it. Intuitive sensibility and strong imagination give rise to noble, grand conceptions; these, in turn, seek a mode of outward embodiment that is direct, proportionate, and marked by noble simplicity. Excessive display, inappropriate exaggeration, or mannered artificiality signal a breakdown of this art–nature unity: they betray a lack of true sensibility by substituting the external signs of greatness for the thing itself, which must breathe through external features. By contrast, authentic, genuinely felt sublimity produces a tight coupling between inner feeling and outward expression. When such expressions are delivered effectively, they should do what Burgh describes: they sweep listeners out of themselves, captivate their attention, and take momentary possession of their passions.

2.5 The Poetics of Sensibility

For the ends of this study, the poetics of sensibility—the principles and techniques by which a discourse is shaped to produce particular effects in an audience—merit examination. Such features trace how passions are identified in the text, embodied in delivery, and made to yield sympathetic response in an audience. In this final section of the chapter, two features of sentimental poetics will be examined: the sequencing of passions and the use of description.

2.5.1 Sequencing of Passions

Brewster uses the term “sentimental storytelling” to describe the poetic structure that the rhetorically-minded poet used to elicit sympathy. As Brewster describes it, this type of narrative was “believed to set in train the sympathetic reaction that proliferates sensibility, uniting narrator, narrated and listener/reader.”⁶⁴ Sentimental storytelling may be understood as a continuation of classical rhetorical practice, in which the orator first analysed each division of the discourse to identify the predominant affect and then planned how best to render it in delivery. In a similar manner, the writer or declaimer presents “sentimental” objects and events—scenes of suffering, virtue, tenderness, or moral trial—in

⁶³ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 75.

⁶⁴ Brewster, “Sentiment and Sensibility”, p. 29.

descriptive form to auditors, so that these imagined situations can become the catalysts of sympathetic feeling. Jed Wentz notes that eighteenth-century performers sought to identify emotional states in the text, not only to present sentimental objects and events, but to relate them to the character they play: “for it was there, in the text, that the character – with whom the actor was encouraged to identify through acts of will and imagination – was revealed, by means of the passions assigned to the role.”⁶⁵ Likewise, “rhetorical figures had to be performed rhetorically, with vocal inflexions, accompanied by physical gestures, that correspond their meaning.”⁶⁶

Various pedagogical manuals of the period in elocution and rhetorical acting, like those by Aaron Hill, Thomas Sheridan Jr., James Burgh, John Walker, Johann Jakob Engel, Gilbert Austin, and others, often “passionate” texts, providing an emotional scoring, denoting the specific passions expressed in various divisions of texts. For instance, in his *Art of Public Speaking* (1761), Burgh notates various sentiments and actions like courage, deep thoughtfulness, vexation, and apprehension in Hamlet’s famous soliloquy. Music of the period was handled in a similar, narrative-driven sequential process, as evidenced by the writings of the musical theorists of the period including Forkel, and the composer Georg Joseph Vogler.⁶⁷

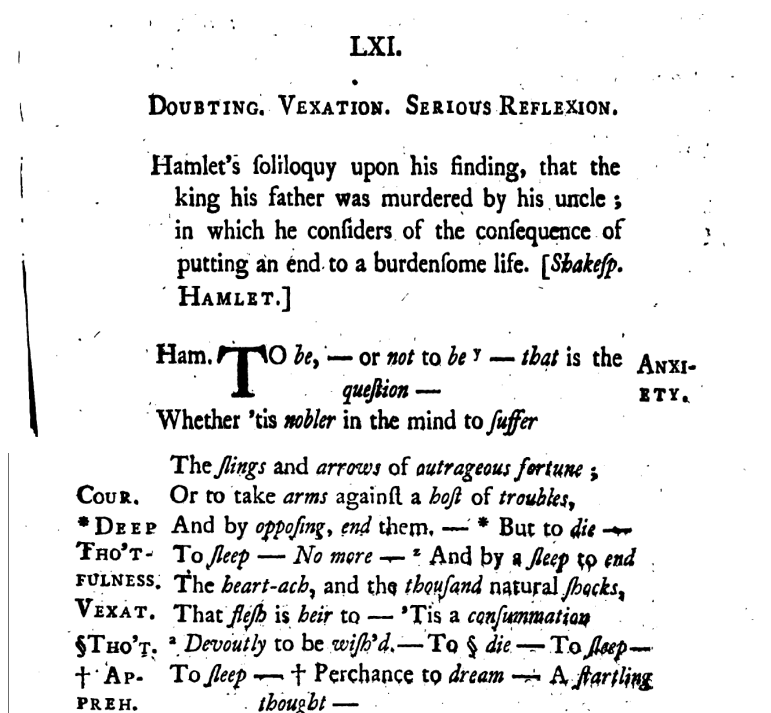


Figure 1. Excerpt from James Burgh, *The Art of Speaking* (1761), pp. 221–22.

⁶⁵ Wentz, “Introduction ...”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 43.

⁶⁷ See Georg Joseph Vogler, „Zergliederung der Ouverture zur Tragödie: Hamlet“, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule* (Speyer: Heinrich Philipp Bossler, 1778–79), Bd. 1, pp. 313–37.

Hence, as evidenced by such sources, the eighteenth-century expressive approach generally involved a systematic process. Firstly, the performer identified each sentiment present in a text through reflection on the sentimental objects, events, and actions presented. These sentiments were presented one at a time, separately, in sequence. Lastly, the performer delivered them in a clearly legible, intensive manner such that the audience had time to recognize, sympathize with, and experience each sentiment individually. In this way, this style relied on a sequenced, heightened naturalism, where the natural signs of the passions are presented in enhanced aestheticized versions of their “natural” appearance.

2.5.2 Description

For sentimental rhetoricians, description was one of the chief engines of affect, because vivid verbal depiction could make objects and passions present to the listener’s imagination. In order to furnish rhetoricians of the age of sensibility with the new sentimental taste, new manuals on rhetoric informed by sentimentalism, like Blair’s influential *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles-Lettres* (1783), Lord Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* (1762), and George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776) adapted themselves to the new taste for sentiment that sought to, as Brewster puts it, “engage with the reader’s feelings” and promote the evocation of affect.⁶⁸ These writers emphasized the artist’s goal of capturing the essence of sublime and beautiful objects such that the evocation of them in the imagination of the performer—and the auditors—will produce those same sentiments that would arise from the perception of such objects in nature. This was achieved through descriptive “sentimental language.” For Walker, descriptive writing was “a species of writing which deserves a very particular consideration, as it is the subject of delivery; [...] there is no part of composition which requires greater taste and judgement, than that where the description of objects is strong and vivid.”⁶⁹ Similarly, for philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, description is immediately effective because “the sublimeness of an object and especially the sublimeness of certain sensibilities must certainly touch people of every sort as soon as they understand the words through which that sublimity has been expressed.”⁷⁰ For sentimental rhetoricians like Blair, descriptive language was the main component of sublime writing, as the “description of objects” or the “exhibition of sentiments” of a sublime nature will “give us a strong impression,”⁷¹ “painted with such circumstances as fill the mind with great and awful ideas.”⁷² In order to strongly catch this impression in the minds of auditors, this language should transcend mere representation of objects as “the Sublime lies in the thought, not in the words.”⁷³ For Blair, such grandiose thoughts must

⁶⁸ Brewster, “Sentiment and Sensibility”, p. 30.

⁶⁹ John Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar: In Which the Common Improprieties in Reading and Speaking Are Detected, and the True Sources of Elegant Pronunciation Are Pointed Out*, 2nd American edition (Boston: Published by Cummings and Hillard, 1822), p. 222.

⁷⁰ Moses Mendelssohn, “On the sublime and naive in the fine sciences”, *Moses Mendelssohn: Philosophical Writings* trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Part II, 217.

⁷¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 73.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

be exhibited in an emotionally warm and glowing manner, seemingly with sufficient fire to catch the audience.⁷⁴ In the musical domain, Mattheson relates that rhetorical invention derived from description is the “most reliable and essential guide for [musical] invention,” as it often deals with the portrayal of “the bottomless sea of human affections.”⁷⁵

This descriptive language was first articulated by the writer—or musical composer—and later, interpreted and animated by the performer through the rhetorical figure of *hypotyposis*, which is sometimes called “word painting.” In his *Rhetorical Grammar* (1809 edition), Walker writes that hypotyposis is “a representation of things in such strong and glowing colours, as to make them seem painted or transacted to the hearer’s imagination.”⁷⁶ He extends this concept further through the rhetorical figure of “vision,” which demands that the speaker not merely describe with words, but use their imagination to visualize, see, gesticulate towards, and physicalize the object as present—emphasizing the actor-like investment of the rhetorical performer. Words themselves would be sonically coloured in delivery to resemble their meanings: metaphors, similes, and pronunciation choices like emphasis on certain syllables (e.g. the boldness of extending the vowel on “all”, or a choice circumflex inflection on the word “gold”) were viewed as further tools to echo the sense with sound, reinforcing the imaginative link between speaker and listener.

This tradition of expressive description found powerful resonance in eighteenth-century music theory, particularly in Mattheson’s *locus descriptionis*—the *topos* of musical description or tone painting, which he regarded as the “most reliable and essential guide for invention.”⁷⁷ This *topos* concerns itself with the portrayal of the “boundless sea of human affections,”⁷⁸ not through words but through sound itself. Hence, embodied sentiments and emotional *topoi* themselves are the fountainhead of invention through musical painting, in whole or in partition, through melody, harmony, and other musical features. As Mattheson emphasizes, “even without words, in purely instrumental music, always and with every melody, the purpose must be to present the governing affection so that the instruments, by means of sound, present it almost verbally and perceptibly.”⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 94.

⁷⁵ Der zweite Erfindungs-Ort in der Reihe, nemlich *locus descriptionis*, gibt uns zu bemerken, daß er zwar, nächst dem ersten, die reichste Quelle, ja gar, meines wenigen Erachtens, die sicherste und wesentlichste Handleitung zur Invention darlege, indem hieher das unergründliche genannte Meer von den menschlichen Gemüths-Neigungen gehört, wenn diese in Noten beschrieben oder abgemahlet werden sollen; allein, eben wegen der Menge und Beschaffenheit solcher vielfältigen und vermischten Leidenschaften lassen sich von diesem Beschreibungs-Orte lange nicht so viele deutliche und besondere Regeln geben, als von dem vorigen. Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 4, §43; trans. Ernest C. Harriss, p. 290.

⁷⁶ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, 2nd American edition, p. 222.

⁷⁷ Full quote above. Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 4, §43; trans. Ernest C. Harriss, p. 290.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Wer aber in den Gedanken stehen möchte, es käme mit dem vorhabenden *loco* wol meistens auf die Bewandniß einiger gewisser zur Music bestimmter Worte an, der hätte zwar nicht sonderlich gefehlet; angesehen der so genannte Text in der Vocal-Music hauptsächlich zu den Beschreibungen der Affecten dienet. Allein, man muß doch hiebei wissen, daß auch ohne Worte, in der bloßen Instrumental-Music allemal und bey einer ieden Melodie, die Absicht auf eine Vorstellung der

This emotional sequencing lies in contrast to (post)modern, contemporary expressive approaches, which rely on a supposed psychological “depth” and realism.⁸⁰ According to *The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, shifts in acting style supplanted rhetorical declamatory acting in the late nineteenth century, and sought to approximate in speech and situation “the social and domestic problems of everyday life, played by actors who spoke and moved naturally against scenery which reproduced with fidelity the usual surroundings of the people they represented.”⁸¹ These expressed emotions may be intense, but are often blended: indistinct and homogenized. Consequently, texts and musical compositions created within the rhetorical paradigm, including those composed during the age of sensibility and early Romanticism, are arguably more effective when their expressive content is delivered in a manner that reflects their design—namely, through clearly sequenced, differentiated states that enable audiences to recognize, inhabit, and be moved by each sentiment in turn. In this way, such an approach better serves their original *telos*: not merely to sketch a general mood, but to guide listeners through a carefully staged progression of passions that can culminate in sympathy, moral reflection, and, at privileged moments, the experience of the Sublime.

regierenden Gemüths-Neigung gerichtet seyn müsse, so daß die Instrumente, mittelst des Clanges, gleichsam einen redenden und verständlichen Vortrag machen. Ibid., Part II, ch. 4, §45.

⁸⁰ Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell, “Method Acting”, *A Dictionary of Film Studies*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁸¹ Phyllis Hartnoll and Peter Found, “Realism”, *The Concise Oxford Companion to the Theatre*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

3. Music as the Language of Sentiments

During the period 1740–1830, many writers, including Johann Nikolaus Forkel, conceived music—especially instrumental music without accompanying text—as a kind of “universal language of sentiments” (*allgemeine Sprache der Empfindungen*). This immediately raises a question that will guide the present chapter: what, in this context, counted as “language” in the period, and how were its vehicles (voice, face, gesture) understood in the period’s rhetorical mindset? As will be proposed below, a recurring assumption in the period is that language is any shared system of signs capable of communicating thought and feeling within a community, and that its scope extends well beyond “grammar” and “words” to encompass musical elements like vocal tones, inflections, and bodily action. In this perspective, “language” denotes any conventionalized nexus of signs—words, musical figures, or gestures—that can convey sentiment and move an audience. This chapter traces how various eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century authors conceptualized that process. Clarifying their accounts is crucial for this study because it illuminates the *telos* behind the musical notes themselves: what music was thought to be doing when it “spoke,” and how its expressive resources were meant to operate. Most importantly, it proposes a historically situated understanding of musical “language” in the period that addresses the notion of “meaning,” which in turn offers a challenge against common modern narratives in musicology like “rational affectivity” and absolute music reception.

3.1 Language, Natural, and Arbitrary Signs

Various eighteenth-century writers insisted that language is not exhausted by semiotics. For these writers, the mechanical deployment of signs (a lexicon plus grammar) is insufficient unless those signs are animated by an underlying emotional psychology—passions, sentiments, feelings—that drives them and gives them force. Meaning is therefore not only what a word “stands for,” but is coloured and intensified in the tone and body: prosody, timbre, intensity, pacing, facial expression, and posture transmit the speaker’s inner state and, in many cases, enable the listener to sympathize with it. In other words, language functions through a coupling between inner feeling and outward signs; when this coupling is tight, inner movements of the soul find immediate and appropriate externalisation, and speech becomes eloquent, moving, and “alive.” When it is weak or absent, the same verbal content may sound empty, forced, or insincere, or the speaker may struggle to adequately communicate an inner motion to others. In this view, the communicative efficacy of language—whether verbal or musical—depends as much on the alignment of internal psychology and embodied delivery as on the abstract code of words or notes themselves.

For instance, in his influential essay on the origin of language, Jean Jacques Rousseau insists that the earliest and most compelling communicative force lies in the musical features of the voice and gesture: “The passions have their gestures, but they also have their accents; these accents [...] pierce to

the bottom of the heart [...] and make us feel what we hear.”¹ Rousseau claims that the communicative core of language lies in the affective charge carried by tone and gesture. Similarly, Hugh Blair noted that the “tones of voice, the looks and gesture [...] are natural interpreters of the sentiments of the mind; they remove ambiguities, enforce impressions, and operate on us by means of sympathy.”² Blair’s observation complements Rousseau by naming the mechanism: sympathy. Delivery converts inward sentiment into outward sign, and listeners identify those signs holistically (as opposed to analytically, using the terms as they are used in cognitive sciences³)—often more quickly and surely than they parse propositional content.

Thomas Sheridan also contributed to this discourse. He illustrates a comparable conception of language and described it throughout his lectures on elocution:

The first thought that would occur to every one, who had not properly considered the point, is, that language is composed of words. And yet, this is so far from being an adequate idea of language, that the point in which most men think its very essence to consist: is not even a necessary property of language. For language, in its full extent, means, any way or method whatsoever, by which all that passes in the mind of one man may be manifested to another. And as this is, chiefly done by an agreement in the use of certain signs, it is no matter, what those signs are; there being little or no natural connection between any verbal signs and our ideas, which is sufficiently evinced by the variety of languages that are spoken in the different countries of the world.⁴

Furthermore, in an illustrative example, Sheridan explains the importance of tone, and how it conveys more meaning than words in many situations:

If any one should say in the same tone of voice, that he uses in delivering indifferent propositions from a cool understanding, “Sure never any mortal was so overwhelmed with grief as I am at this present?” Or, “My rage is roused to a pitch of frenzy, I cannot command it: avoid me, begone this moment, or I shall tear you to pieces.” Sure no one would feel any pity for the distress of the former, or any fear from the threats of the latter. We should either believe that he jested, or if he would be thought serious, we should be provoked to laughter at his absurdity. And why is this? Because he makes use of words only, as the signs of emotions, which it is impossible they can represent; and omits the use of the true signs of the passions, which are tones, looks, and gestures.⁵

¹ Les passions ont leurs gestes, mais elles ont aussi leurs accents [...] ces accents [...] pénètrent [...] jusqu’au fond du cœur. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l’Origine des Langues, Œuvres posthumes de J.J. Rousseau* (Geneva: 1781), VIII p. 362.

² Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 78.

³ This refers to the definition in cognitive science. See Richard E. Nisbett, Kaiping Peng, Incheol Choi, and Ara Norenzayan, “Culture and Systems of Thought: Holistic Versus Analytic Cognition”, *Psychological Review* 108, no. 2 (2001): pp. 291–310. doi:10.1037//0033-295X.108.2.291. https://culcog.studentorg.berkeley.edu/Publications/2001PsyRev_Nisbettetal.pdf

⁴ Thomas Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution: A New Edition*, (London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1796), p.106.

⁵ Ibid., p. 112.

Here, Sheridan proposes that words alone are an incomplete form of communication, as natural signs can contradict the meaning of the words. In this case, the tone matters. Sheridan goes on to emphasize that the tones of voice, being a combination of their pitch, inflection, and timbre, convey sentimental information that is “universally intelligible.” “the tones expressive of sorrow, lamentation, mirth, joy, hatred, anger, love, pity, etc. are the same in all nations, and consequently can excite emotions in us analogous to those passions, when accompanying words which we do not understand.”⁶ Similarly, in his *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (1806), Gilbert Austin notes that “the whole energy or power of exciting analogous emotions in others” lies in “the tones themselves (and not the words),” for whenever the “force of the passions is extreme, words give place to inarticulate sounds: sighs, murmurings, in love; sobs, groans, and cries, in grief; half-choaked sounds in rage; and shrieks in terror.”⁷ It is through proper oratorical delivery, in Austin’s and Sheridan’s view, that these natural signs form most of their meaning. Sheridan describes the ideal public reader, whose apprehension of externals (the words) excites true feeling in the imagination: “the view of the words on paper,” he writes, “will excite in the mind the ideas for which they stand” in order to express the meaning to others, with such conviction that auditors should perceive the ideas as if they “proceeded from the immediate sentiments of our [the speaker’s] own minds.”⁸ Sheridan describes in effect what the orator must do: make their audience feel what he/she feels. In these ways, these eighteenth-century writers challenge the assumption that language is simply made up of words, arguing instead for a broader definition: language encompasses any method by which thoughts and feelings in one mind can be conveyed to another. For Sheridan, eloquence happens when convention is coloured by “nature:” words supply denotation, while embodied delivery clothes these words in sentiment.

Overall, this notion of language could be divided into *arbitrary* (artificial) signs and *natural* signs. Arbitrary or “instituted” signs—for instance, words—mean what they do by convention; their link to ideas is socially agreed, not inherent. Natural signs, including those of the passions like tones, looks, and gestures, spring from human psychology and physiology. Both kinds are, in one sense, external (they are outward signals that are conventionalized and understood within a community), but they differ in origin and force. Arbitrary signs are selected and combined by rule; natural signs, when animated by genuine feeling, are part of behaviour and arise “naturally” as emotions colour delivery. Because they track human affective responses, natural signs are widely intelligible within a cultural community—perhaps not perfectly demonstrably universal, but broadly readable wherever listeners share similar bodily habits and manners. As Austin puts it in his *Chironomia* (1806), drawing on Cicero’s antique authority, action, or the “external part of oratory” including voice and gesture, is “the language of the body.”⁹ He then characterizes natural signs as broadly intelligible because they ride on

⁶ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution: A New Edition*, p. 113.

⁷ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 64.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

shared affective and bodily responses: “The tones of the voice are never misunderstood... [and] the very animals themselves quickly learn to comprehend the soft accents of man’s caressing, and the rude sounds of his anger.”¹⁰ Quoting Lord Kames to sharpen the contrast, Austin notes that “the natural signs of emotions [...] form an universal language [...] For if these signs were, like words, arbitrary and variable,” social understanding would be obstructed; whereas “words are sufficient for the communication of science,” the passions require a more immediate avenue “to the heart.”¹¹ Both arbitrary and natural signs are outward, but only the latter, when driven by authentic feeling, belong to natural human behaviour and arise directly from the psychology that animates delivery. Hence, for these eighteenth-century thinkers, tone and gesture are not mere decoration: they are the primary medium through which emotions are communicated.

3.2 Rousseau’s Theories on Natural Expression

As demonstrated by the theories proposed by writers like Sheridan and Austin, a theory of rhetorical performance depends on more than semantic clarity: it hinges on embodied delivery, where meaning is communicated through natural signs of inner feeling. In this perspective, persuasion and affect do not arise solely from what is said, but from how the body sounds and moves while saying it. Eighteenth-century writers therefore often grounded rhetoric in an anthropology of expression, asking how such natural signs could precede and authorize conventional language. Rousseau’s account, which will be explored in this section, is especially consequential here, because it imagines the earliest human utterance as inherently musical.

As Cicero had proposed already in antiquity, music and speech share many qualities which are linked to the natural signs.¹² Consequently, oratory was influenced by music just as much as music was influenced by oratory. This notion extended into the realm of anthropology in the eighteenth century. Rousseau imagined the first human language as inherently musical: born of passion, sung before it was spoken, and shaped by the body in motion.¹³ In his account, early humans did not trade cool, abstract signs; they cried out melodically under the pressure of feeling. “The first languages were melodious and passionate, before becoming simple and methodical.”¹⁴ he writes. In this vision, melody, rhythm, and gesture precede words, and tone carries intention before any stable lexicon does. Sentimental meaning springs from the inflected voice—its rise and fall, its colour and intensity. Only later do communities cool and codify this passionate song into conventional words and grammar; but the

¹⁰ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 469.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 474–475.

¹² See p. 43.

¹³ A somewhat comparable notion of language, born of cries of passion, was also conveyed in German discourse of the time by the philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, especially in his *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1772). See for example, Nigel DeSouza, “Language, Reason, and Sociability: Herder’s Critique of Rousseau”, *Intellectual History Review* 22, no. 2 (2012), pp. 221–240.

¹⁴ les premières langues furent chantantes & passionnées, avant d’être simples & méthodiques. Rousseau, *Essai sur l’Origine des Langues*, p. 365.

musical substrate remains, so that speech still depends on melody, emphasis, and timing to convey its sentiments. Thus, for Rousseau, language, speech, and music are not parallel arts but branches of a single expressive root: the sounded, embodied discharge of the passions.

Rousseau was particularly critical of the shortcomings of written language. In particular, he criticized its tendency to erase the musical features that make language truly expressive in his view:

Writing, which seems to fix language, is precisely what alters it; it does not burden words but genius; it substitutes accuracy for expression. We convey our feelings when we speak and our ideas when we write. When writing, one is forced to take all words in their common meaning; but the speaker varies meanings through tone, determining them as he pleases; less constrained to be clear, he gives more to force, and it is not possible for a written language to retain for long the liveliness of one that is only spoken. We write voices, not sounds: yet in an accented language, it is the sounds, accents, and inflections of all kinds that are the greatest energy of language, and make a sentence, otherwise common, unique to the place where it is spoken. The means we use to compensate for this extend and lengthen the written language, and, passing from books into speech, weaken the very word itself.¹⁵

Rousseau argues that writing, rather than preserving language in its true form, transforms and limits it by sacrificing expressive richness for rigid precision. Spoken language lets the speaker shape meaning through tone, accent, and inflection, lending it a dynamic, emotive power that writing cannot capture. Words alone are an incomplete vehicle for the full depth of thought; the natural sounds of the voice—its timbre, accents, inflections, and rhythms—carry vital expressive force. When these “musical” features are stripped away, the passions that arose with and from the ideas themselves fall silent. Based on such accounts, including those of Sheridan and Austin, the orator’s role could be viewed as re-awakening these passions with embodied delivery. A similar parallel could apply to musical notation, which is not able to capture all of the intuitive expressive possibilities that arise in the moment, like agogics, rubato, instinctive dynamic shadings, and other expressions that are born out of sensibility pouring into a flexible imagination. By its very nature, musical notation forces expression into tidy boxes.

Thus, in rhetorical delivery, the orator’s task is to re-animate. The poet may have composed the words on the page with a living flood of sentiments, but once written, those sentiments are muted by

¹⁵ L’écriture, qui semble devoir fixer la langue, est précisément ce qui l’altère; elle n’en charge pas les mots mais le génie; elle substitue l’exactitude à l’expression. L’on rend ses sentimens quand on parle & ses idées quand on écrit. en écrivant on est force de prendre tous les mots dans l’acception [376] commune; mais celui qui parle varie les acceptions par les tons, il les détermine comme il lui plaît; moins gêne pour être clair, il donne plus a la force, & il n’est pas possible qu’une langue qu’on écrit garde long-tems la vivacité de celle qui n’est que parlée. On écrit les voix & non pas les sons: or dans une langue accentuée ce sont les sons, les accens, les inflexions de toute espece qui sont la plus grande énergie du langage; & rendent une phrase, d’ailleurs commune, propre seulement au lieu ou elle est. Les moyens qu’on prend pour suppléer a celui-là étendent, alongent la langue écrite, & passant des livres dans le discours énervent la parole même. Rousseau, *Essai sur l’origine des langues*, p. 375.

the loss of vocal timbre, melody, dynamic shading, timing, and gesture. When an orator reads and declaims such a text, he/she does not merely sound the words; they re-introduce the colouring of passion, interpreting the externals (meaning of words, punctuation, cadence, emphasis, rhythm) as a prompt—a starting point for a flexible creative realization. The aim is to call forth the sentiments the writer once had; but the effect, inevitably, is that the sentiments realized in performance are the orator's own, awakened in dialogue with the text. The same logic applies to music. The score presents external features—pitches, durations, articulations, dynamics—that risk a comparable “cooling” when left as notation. Following this view, the musical orator seeks to re-animate these signs so that they recover their affective vigour. In this view, interpretation is a sentimental art: it reunites idea and passion.

Magnus Tessing Schneider's critique of theatre semiotics is helpful here, because it exposes how a semiotic conception of performance tends to abstract away precisely this experiential dimension.¹⁶ In his account, post-1960s theatre semiotics (and Dene Barnett's reconstruction of eighteenth-century acting) reduces theatrical communication to a system of signs whose task is to represent values or meanings for the spectator to decode, thereby marginalizing the spectator's creative agency, the immediacy of aesthetic experience, and the unstable, affective relation between stage and audience. A similar “semiotic bias” seemingly is at work in these musicological accounts that foreground “rationalized affect” and the *Affektenlehre* as a codebook for their representation. Taking the argument of Rousseau and other eighteenth-century writers, such a model silences the emotional psychology behind the signs. The “semiotic bias” implies that emotion is primarily an intellectual recognition of stylistic markers rather than a bodily, pre-reflective response to an embodied act of delivery. Contrastingly, in the eighteenth-century view, truly expressive signs require underlying sensibility and inner feeling that first gave rise to them.

Hence, a purely semiotic conception of language—and by extension, of musical “language”—is necessarily inadequate for describing the notion of “language” in the view of these eighteenth-century writers. The analytic identification of signs can certainly communicate ideas: the recognition of a symbol like the gestural sign of a cross may awaken associated passions in listeners by learned association. Yet for Rousseau and for many sentimentalists of the period, this is a derivative, second-order mode of expression. It is not “natural” in the sense these writers value most, because the sign is now operating at a distance from the internal movement (inner feeling) that originally produced it. Ideas divorced from their underlying psychology can still signify and even move, but especially in the performing arts context, ideas driven directly by inner feeling are always preferred, both ethically and aesthetically, as they arise from—and in turn reawaken—a genuine stirring of sensibility. This helps to explain why period musicians such as Mozart, C.P.E. Bach, Beethoven, and Hummel insist repeatedly

¹⁶ See Magnus Tessing Schneider, “Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 81–110.

on a delivery that is not mere “correct” representation of external musical features (the signs), but one fueled and animated by genuine inner feeling. Their treatises and letters do not ask performers simply to reproduce a code of figures and topics; they urge them to be moved emotionally what they play in order to move others. Likewise, the musical signs only become fully eloquent when they are reconnected to an inner “language of sentiments” that animates them from within.

3.3 The Associative Properties of Music

The argument now turns to a parallel problem in eighteenth-century aesthetics: whether music, especially without words, can operate in an analogous way to a spoken language. If Rousseau and other eighteenth-century writers ground expression in the natural signs of the body rather than in conventional semantics alone, then instrumental music becomes a crucial test case. The question is no longer whether music can translate a text’s meanings, but whether it can function as a self-sufficient medium of sentiment by mobilizing the same kinds of perceptible, affect-bearing signs that make delivery eloquent. The following section therefore moves from theories of linguistic origin to the period’s debates about instrumental music’s capacity to communicate specific meaning—and about the emergence of a sentimentalist account that increasingly treated its effects as both real and legible. Asking what music can and should express matters for the rhetorical performer because rhetorical delivery is not a neutral transmission of notes, but an exercise of expressive agency. If performance seeks to move emotionally, the performer should be able to access what the music “means” in affective terms—what kinds of sentiments it projects, how those sentiments relate to one another over time, and how such content could plausibly have been conceived within the period’s own sentimental aesthetics. Without some account of musical expressivity, the performer’s choices risk becoming either merely technical or purely idiosyncratic. This is the performer’s practical imperative: to determine what kinds of sentimental ideas are being staged and to decide how to render them intelligible to listeners.

Much debate arose in the eighteenth century about the ability of instrumental music to express any specific meaning. In vocal music, melody and harmony could amplify the *pathos* of text. But could instrumental music stand on its own as a language of sentiment? The often-quoted remark of Fontenelle comes to mind—“Sonate, que me veux-tu?” [Sonata, what do you want from me?]¹⁷—which succinctly expresses the doubt on this point felt by some theorists during the first half of the eighteenth century. But as the empirical effects of music were given further attention, a new sentimentalist theory of music developed, emancipating emotion from the meaning of the words of the vocal text.

How did eighteenth-century writers conceptualize how music moved the passions? And how do musical conventions shape what listeners feel? The logic begins in ordinary speech. As the above writers argued, passion rides on vocal tones, looks, and gestures, so that before a listener parses words, they register affect. These cues are natural signs tied to embodied delivery, and listeners respond via

¹⁷ Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 63.

sympathy. Music in the period, as will be argued via the aesthetics of sensibility, was conceived to move the passions by painting analogous cues of embodied delivery evoked through sound. In this view, stylistic conventions do not replace this natural linkage; they frame and sharpen it for a community. Just as Cicero assigned each emotion a “particular tone of voice,” and Rousseau, Sheridan, and Austin saw passion in tone and gesture, modern studies in music psychology broadly corroborate the picture: systematic manipulations of musical features elicit recognizable emotional families.¹⁸

Questions about the empirical operation of music on the emotions were present in early modern scientific inquiry. In his *Musurgia Universalis* (1650), the scientist Athanasius Kircher had correctly characterized sound as a longitudinal wave, demonstrated in various experiments. These waves were a product of the motions of bodies, and these waves transmitted and induced resonances in other objects: including the various fluids of the body. Mattheson used such theories to elaborate a musical theory of his own. In *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739) he sketches a “natural theory of sound.” In short, Mattheson noted that sound is caused by movement, and specifically, the collision between rigid, soft, or flowing bodies. It is the force and violence of this collision which leads to the quality and nature of sound, whether loud, soft, explosive, soothing, roaring, etc.¹⁹ The characteristics of this sound directly affected the human nervous system, thus giving rise to sentimental experience without the need of words. The relation of sound to motion and sensation gives music the power to imitate and consequently paint concepts in the imagination, because the various passions are a consequence of motions and sensations within the body. Even passions that appear to be “raised by ideas,” such as the realization that a friend is treacherous, were often understood to have a bodily basis. The thought is transmitted through the nerves and imagination into physical agitation, manifesting as a quickened pulse, tightened breath, heat, trembling, etc. Consequently, the “idea” is not motionless but rather triggers motion in the body. In this view, this is why music, by acting on sensation, can still imitate and “paint” such passions in the imagination. For Mattheson, different musical features associated with certain passions, simply based on their resemblance to the natural signs: the human voice and body agitated by *pathos*. These emotional commonplaces, or *topoi*, form the basis of music’s ability to express the various sentiments via tone painting: musical mimesis.

Understanding the physiological nature of the passions, therefore, was of importance to the prospective musician. As Mattheson wrote:

What are the passions? How many are there? How are they initiated and stimulated? Should one eliminate them or admit and tend to them? Such questions seem more appropriate for the consummate philosopher than actually for a Capellmeister; yet the latter ineluctably must

¹⁸ See Carol Krumhansl, “An Exploratory Study of Musical Emotions and Psychophysiology”, *Canadian Journal of Experimental Psychology* 51 (1997), pp. 336–52.

¹⁹ See Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part I, ch. 3, §8–11; trans. Ernest C. Harriss, pp. 93–94.

know that the affections of men are the true material of virtue, and the latter is nought but a well-ordered and prudently-moderate affection.²⁰

Mattheson's provocation is that the Kapellmeister's true "material" is not craft alone, but the human passions—and, crucially, that these passions are legible in musical features. Mattheson treats affects as knowable, nameable dispositions with characteristic external musical signatures: tempo, metre, melodic inflections, tonality and harmony all connect to embodied natural signs. In other words, passions are not merely suggested by music; they can be read in the design of its parameters. For Mattheson, a Kapellmeister who cannot analyze and marshal the passions is like an orator without command of rhetoric's *actio*: he may possess mechanical command of craft, but lacks the very faculty that moves the passions of others through his art. As Bartel underscores, "for Mattheson, the power of music was rooted in nature rather than mathematics, in empirical observation rather than theoretical speculation, in melody, ultimately, rather than in counterpoint."²¹ In Mattheson's view, the rhetorical commonplaces were not cold, objective structures of rationalized, intellectual representation, but warm triggers born from inner feeling: emotion that fired the passionate engines of the sentimental imagination. Hence, for Mattheson, musical meaning was not rooted solely in allegories, numerology, emblematic symbols, or analytical representations of the emotions: it painted the passions as embodied delivery in sound.

Other theorists wrote further about music's mimetic and associative powers. Charles Avison observes in his *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752) that the "Force of Sound in alarming the Passions is prodigious" since "the Noise of Thunder, the Shouts of War, the Uproar of an enraged Ocean, strike us with Terror: So again, there are certain sounds natural to Joy, others to Grief, or Despondency, others to Tenderness and Love."²² Avison's statement implies that a listener must also have a degree of sensibility to be sympathetically affected by music. Furthermore, Avison notes that musical expression exploits a listener's capacity for "Methods of Association," which can strike many powerful images into the imagination of listeners and awaken vivid passions in the heart: for "bringing the Objects of our Passions before us [...] does naturally raise a Variety of Passions in the human Breast, similar to the Sounds which are expressed."²³ Consequently, as Avison underscores, "by the Musician's Art, we are often carried into the Fury of a Battle, or a Tempest, we are by turns elated with Joy, or sunk in

²⁰ Was die Leidenschaften sind, wie viel der selben gezehlet werden, auf was Weise sie in den Gang zu bringen und rege zu machen, ob man sie ausrotten oder zulassen und ihrer pflegen soll? das sind, dem Ansehen nach, solche Fragen, die einem vollkommenen Weltweisen mehr, als einem eigentlichen Capellmeister zu erörtern obliegen; so viel aber muß dieser dennoch unumgänglich davon wissen, daß die Gemüths-Neigungen der Menschen die wahre Materie der Tugend, und diese nichts anders sey, als eine wol-eingerichtete und klüglich-gemäßigte Gemüths-Neigung. Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part I, ch. 3, §52; trans. Ernest C. Harriss, p. 104.

²¹ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 137.

²² Charles Avison, *An Essay on the Art of Musical Expression* (London: printed for C. Davis, 1752), pp. 3–4.

²³ Avison, *An Essay on the Art of Musical Expression*, pp. 3–4.

pleasing Sorrow, roused to Courage, or quelled by grateful Terrors, melted in Pity, Tenderness, and Love, or transported to the Regions of Bliss, in an Extacy of divine Praise”²⁴

Rousseau likewise asserts that it is through melody’s connection to the voice that a musical language takes on its own form:

Melody, by imitating the inflexions of the voice, expresses complaints, cries of sadness or of joy, threats, and moans; all the vocal signs of the passions are within its scope. It imitates the accents of languages, and the turns of phrase appropriate in each idiom to certain movements of the soul; it not only imitates, it speaks, and its language, inarticulate but lively, ardent, passionate, has a hundred times more energy than speech itself. Here is from whence the strength of musical imitation arises.²⁵

To Rousseau, music’s mimetic powers can produce even more powerful emotional responses than speech itself. The powers of notes to convey the tones of the pathos-laden voice was attested, for instance, by Charles Burney, who in 1772 heard C.P.E. Bach perform on clavichord in Hamburg. Burney exclaimed that “in the pathetic and slow movements, whenever he had a long note to express, he absolutely contrived to produce, from his instrument, a cry of sorrow and complaint, such as can only be effected upon the clavichord, and perhaps by himself.”²⁶ For Burney, it was the power of C.P.E. Bach’s effective delivery that transformed simple long notes into emotionally salient tones, likely achieved through meticulous shaping on the clavichord. Hence, as in descriptive language and rhetorical *hypotyposis*, music expresses through evocation of objects in the imagination, not only through figures like *onomatopoeia* in such examples given by Avison as mimicking “the Noise of Thunder” or “the Uproar of an enraged Ocean,” but also by descriptively painting the human passions through their natural and embodied expression; a concept which would be known as musical painting. This was evident also to listeners: for instance, the music critic Johann Karl Friedrich Triest described C.P.E. Bach in 1801 as another Klopstock who used notes instead of words.²⁷

3.4 Musical Painting and the Emergence of a Musical Language of Sentiments

In service of a rhetorical performer understanding what music is about and what it seeks to communicate, it is useful to understand period theories of musical painting and affective depiction. “Painting” here does not imply literal representation; rather, it names the set of compositional and

²⁴ Avison, *An Essay on the Art of Musical Expression*, pp. 3–4.

²⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions*, OC, vol. 1, 384; the issue is discussed in Robert Wokler, “‘La Querelle des Bouffons’ and the Italian Liberation of France: A Study of Revolutionary Foreplay”, *Eighteenth-Century Life* 11 (1987), pp. 94–116; Elisabeth Cook, “Challenging the Ancien Régime: The Hidden Politics of the ‘Querelle des Bouffons’”, Andrea Fabiano (ed.), *La ‘Querelle des Bouffons’, dans la vie culturelle française du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2005), pp. 141–60.

²⁶ Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, vol. II, p. 269.

²⁷ Johann Karl Friedrich Triest, „Bemerkungen über die Ausbildung der Tonkunst in Deutschland im achtzehnten Jahrhundert“, *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, 3 (1801), cols. 300–01.

performative means by which music can make sentiments present without relying on words. The previous aforementioned concepts of musical association were unified by German Enlightenment philosopher, Johann Jakob Engel in his *Über musikalische Malerey* (originally published in 1780). Engel states that the goal of musical tone painting (*Malen*) is “not to suggest an object to the mind by merely arbitrary, prearranged signs, but to bring it before the senses by natural signs.”²⁸ For example, while the word “lion” semantically associates an idea in the mind, a “painting” of a lion through descriptive words like “roar” would awaken its characteristics in the sympathetic imagination and would be tangibly experienced through the senses: a sentimental depiction via *hypotyposis*.

Engel’s theory of *musikalische Malerei* (musical painting) allows images, physical gestures, sensations, and even abstract sentimental concepts to become sources of musical expression, painted through musical topoi. As Engel states, the musician “can, through his tones, as through natural signs, evoke ideas of other related objects; he can, through them, suggest these objects to us, just as the painter suggests his through colours: [...] he must make his tones as imitative as possible and give them as much resemblance to the object itself as possible.”²⁹ His theory offers three principal strategies by which the musician can depict objects, actions, and feelings in music, each growing in abstraction, and depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Engel’s strategies for musical painting.

Strategy	Relation	Description
Direct Imitation	Sound to Sound	Music mimics the sounds created by actual objects: thunder, birds, battles, etc.
Transcendental Similarities	Cross-sensory	Music evokes non-audible phenomena (e.g., trembling body, or visual movement) by mimicking analogous sonic traits. Imagination links different sensory inputs (e.g. sound → touch, sound → vision.)
Impression of the Object on the Soul	Abstract Evocation	Music conveys abstract ideas or inner emotional states—joy, sorrow, longing—without any direct imitation of external phenomena. (e.g. Soft colours are like soft tones and consonances → calm and tender emotions)

First, the most concrete method relies on direct imitation of audible phenomena to “awaken the imagination of the whole by imitating the audible.”³⁰ For example, as Avison also described, composers

²⁸ Malen heißt: Einen Gegenstand, nicht durch bloß willkürliche verabredete Zeichen für den Verstand andeuten, sondern ihn durch natürliche Zeichen vor die sinnliche Empfindung bringen. Johann Jacob Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei, An den Königl. Capellmeister Herrn [Johann Friedrich] Reichardt. eschrieben 1780“, *Auszug nach: Johann Jacob Engel: Schriften, Bd. 4* (Berlin: 1802), p. 300.

²⁹ er kann durch seine Töne, als durch natürliche Zeichen, Vorstellungen anderer verwandten Gegenstände erwecken; kann uns durch sie diese Gegenstände, wie der Maler die seinigen durch Farben, andeuten wollen: [...] er muß seine Töne so nachahmend machen, und ihnen mit dem Gegenstande selbst so viel Ähnlichkeit geben, als möglich. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, pp. 302–03.

³⁰ Der Tonkünstler erweckt in der Phantasie die Vorstellung des Ganzen, indem er das Hörbare nachahmt. Ibid., p. 304.

can evoke thunder, bird calls, or battle scenes through sonic mimicry. Here the connection is immediate and sensory: thunder heard in nature is imitated in music to provoke recognition in the listener's imagination. Second, Engel describes what he calls painting by transcendental similarities (*transcendentelle Ähnlichkeiten*), which link music and non-audible phenomena through cross-sensory associations: a sort of isomorphic linkage. The object of expression may lack any sound of its own—for instance, the trembling of a frightened body—but music can nonetheless “paint” it by using sonic gestures that share “certain general characteristics which provide the imagination with an easy transition from the latter to the former.”³¹ In other words, the associative faculty of the listener's imagination bridges the gap: it perceives the shivering body and the quivering tremolo in music as analogous because of shared qualities like irregularity, tension, or agitation. This strategy allows musicians to evoke sensations and images that belong to other sensory domains by crafting mimetic sound-patterns that trigger these cross-modal associations in culturally attuned listeners.

Third, at the most abstract level, Engel identifies a mode of musical painting in which the musician uses “neither a part nor a quality of the object itself” but rather “the impression that this object tends to make on the soul.”³² Engel claims that this is the preferred, and most refined way for music to paint.³³ Instead of imitating external attributes, the musician seeks to convey the internal abstract emotional effect—the sentiment—that the object would arouse. This is inner feeling: a psychological colouring. Engel offers an example of the analogy between the impression of a soft colour and the calm that a gentle musical tone evokes in the soul, like a still, consonant texture. This form of painting abandons direct representation in favour of eliciting in the listener a felt response that corresponds to the emotional impact of the original object or idea. Engel claims this is the most elevated and desirable mode of musical painting because it works on the listener's feelings directly, aiming at the heart rather than the senses. For Engel, all “passionate imaginings of the soul are inextricably linked to certain corresponding movements in the nervous system [...] But nothing causes such certain, powerful and manifold vibrations as sounds.”³⁴ Moreover, as Engel underscores, music “chooses tones that have an effect on the nerves similar to the impressions of a given sensation; to this end, she selects the instrument, pitch and depth of the tones.”³⁵ Engel's “impression on the soul” and his appeal to the nerves

³¹ *Zweitens* kann zwar der Gegenstand ganz und gar nichts Hörbares enthalten; aber er trifft mit den hörbaren Tönen in gewissen allgemeinen Eigenschaften zusammen, die der Phantasie einen leichten Übergang von diesen auf jenen verschaffen. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, p. 304.

³² [...] der Tonsetzer malt noch *Drittens*: indem er weder einen Theil, noch eine Eigenschaft des Gegenstandes selbst, sondern den Eindruck nachahmt, den dieser Gegenstand auf die Seele zu machen pflegt. Durch dieses Mittel erhält die musikalische Nachahmung ihren. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, pp. 307–08.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

³⁴ Alle leidenschaftlichen Vorstellungen der Seele sind mit gewissen entsprechenden Bewegungen im Nervensystem unzertrennlich verbunden ... Durch nichts aber werden die Erschütterungen so sicher, so mächtig, so mannigfaltig bewirkt, als durch Töne. *Ibid.*, p. 312.

³⁵ Sie wählt die Töne von so einer Wirkung auf die Nerven, welche den Eindrücken einer gegebenen Empfindung ähnlich ist; wählt zu diesem Endzweck Instrument, Höhe und Tiefe der Töne. *Ibid.*, p. 316.

shift musical painting beyond the mimetic reproduction of externals (noises, images, cross-sensory analogies) toward composition and performance grounded in inner feeling. The crucial claim is physiological as well as rhetorical: because every passionate imagining is coupled with specific movements in the nervous system, music that is conceived and delivered from the performer's own felt state can induce a homologous state in the listener. In other words, expression works not merely by representing an object but by presenting a bodily condition that the listener's body can sympathetically mirror. The performer's embodied delivery becomes the conduit by which an internal, subjective affective configuration is externalized and made contagious, becoming intersubjective. Thus, Engel values the "third" and most abstract mode not because it is vague, but because it is most direct: it bypasses literal depiction and acts directly upon the inner feelings of the listener, sympathetically aligning the listener's bodily state (the nerves) with the performer's. Musical writing, then, achieves its highest aim when invention and execution arise from genuine subjective sentiment, organized into the natural signs that can be felt as much as understood—rhetorical art that moves the heart by moving the body.

Similar notions were expressed by the theorist, Johann Nikolaus Forkel. As Bartel underscores, for Forkel, "the expression of the sentiments is accomplished through the employment of the figures for the imagination." Hence, a composer "should concentrate on expressing the sentiments which are aroused by external stimuli instead of attempting to depict the external object itself."³⁶ For example, he cites, a "Garden-sonata, which is to express that gentle feeling which we experience in breathing in the beneficent and soothing garden air."³⁷ In this instance, depicting the sensations that a garden produces on the individual is preferable to imitating objects in the garden, like the sounds of birds and bees. In a similar manner, a plausible and analogous interpretation of Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony (1803) would be one that primarily paints the inner feelings of a hero. Unlike other "heroic" pieces in the *battalia* genre, it does not mimic artillery, clashing sabres, or cavalry charges, but renders resolve, daring, struggle, grief, and exaltation through musical means—explosive assertions, destabilizing dissonances, vast tussles, and other means. While the images of a battle might arise in the listener's imagination, this results not from recognition of the signs of battle, but from direct sympathetic feelings of heroism.

Finding Engel's first two "lesser" classes of painting to be gaudy, Forkel warns against the use of musical *onomatopoeia*.³⁸ Importantly, the language of sentiments was not a mere semiotics of signs, but signs which had underlying psychology: inner feeling drove outward expression. This sentiment was shared by some composers of the period: Joseph Haydn, for instance, criticized the "ludicrous"

³⁶ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 163.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

word paintings in *The Seasons* (1801), objecting to having to musically depict croaking frogs.³⁹ As Engel notes, “the musician should always prefer to depict feelings rather than objects of feeling; always prefer to depict the state into which the soul, and with it the body, is transported by contemplating a certain thing or event, rather than the thing or event itself.”⁴⁰ Similarly, for Engel, arbitrary signs “paint[ed] the word” rather than the idea or sensation,⁴¹ and were less emotionally engaging than music that evoked pathos through natural signs. This parallels a dichotomy posed in poetics by Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783): that between “representation” and “description.” For Blair, imitation uses signs with a “natural likeness”⁴² to the object, while description works by “raising in the mind the conception of an object” through sympathetic imagination.⁴³ He notes that a staged imitation of battle would appear artificial compared to Homer’s *Iliad*, whose vivid language acts directly on the imagination to evoke sublime feelings.⁴⁴ The artist’s goal in both cases is to portray “nature” or real scenes, but whereas imitation focuses on external forms, description uses imagination and prioritizes producing inner feeling in the spectator through sympathetic imagination. Therefore, for both Blair and Engel, description, or aiming to produce the impression of the object “on the soul,” is always preferred. “Descriptive” musical painting, as opposed to “representational” or “imitative” painting, activates the listener’s imagination, creating psychological resonance.

However, arguably, Engel’s most “refined” strategy depends on a foundation laid by the first two. Without the groundwork of recognizable imitations and analogies, there would be no cultural memory or shared external vocabulary of signs through which subjective inner feelings could be intelligible and communicable to others. Over time, the accumulated repertoire of musical gestures — initially tied to concrete representations — becomes conventionalized into an external vocabulary for inner feelings that a composer or improviser can use intuitively to express themselves. Once this external vocabulary is organized into coherent musical syntax—articulated through form, proportion, and structure ordering that reflects the poetics of sensibility—it can function as a communicable “language of sentiments” in Forkel’s sense, and in a way that remains compatible with Rousseau’s primacy of embodied signification. Forkel treats music as:

a universal language of sentiments [...] whose scope can be and in fact is as great as the scope of a developed language of ideas. In a language of ideas, the highest degree of development is manifested in an abundance of expressions for all possible thoughts and their

³⁹ James Webster, “The Sublime and the Pastoral in *The Creation* and *The Seasons*”, *The Cambridge Companion to Haydn* ed. Caryl Clark (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 152.

⁴⁰ Daß der Musiker immer lieber Empfindungen, als Gegenstände von Empfindungen malen soll; immer lieber den Zustand, worin die Seele und mit ihr der Körper durch Betrachtung einer gewissen Sache und Begebenheit versetzt wird, als diese Sache und Begebenheit selbst. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, pp. 319–20.

⁴¹ Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, p. 337.

⁴² Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 111.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 112.

concomitant relationships; in correctness and order in the concatenation of these thoughts with one another; and in the possibility of manipulating and using all these expressions according to the various ends and goals that an orator can bring to bear upon them. In just this manner, the language of notes must also have (1) an abundance of combinations among notes; (2) correctness and order in the concatenation of the same; and (3) a specific goal. These are the three chief characteristics of a true, good, and authentic music.⁴⁵

In Forkel's musical "language of sentiments," an "abundance of combinations" of notes and other such musical features are ordered aesthetically to achieve a sort of affective *telos*. This framework also clarifies why Forkel's aesthetics places such weight on rhetorical figures and their tasteful disposition. In Forkel's view, it is not the isolated identification of a topic or gesture, but the way figures are composed into an ordered trajectory that pursues an affective *telos*, much like the way verbal language functions. As will be shown in Chapters 7 and 8, Forkel realizes this ideal through the selection of rhetorical figures and, above all, through their syntactic and formal arrangement.

In sum, for Engel and Forkel, musical expression rests on the interplay of natural signs (physiologically grounded cues) and artificial signs (conventional, culturally shared cues). Coordinated, these signs yield a practical emotional lexicon—a rhetorical resource for invention, disposition, elaboration, and delivery. Even Engel's seemingly private "impression on the soul" enters this system: an inner feeling becomes communicable only when externalized through signs, and only then can it elicit specific sensory-affective states in the listener. Hence, as Engel underscores, music "paints" by selecting tones whose effects on the nerves resemble the impressions of a given sensation; in this sense, music is a physiological art that moves not merely by representation but by acting directly on the body. Engel maps a graded pathway for this effect: from (1) literal imitation of externals, through (2) imaginative analogies stabilized by convention, to (3) an increasingly abstract transmission of affect guided by an intuition of inner feeling. This progression, in turn, parallels Rousseau's anthropology of expression, in which communication begins in impassioned, sounded, embodied signs before it cools into codified language; and it also grounds Forkel's claim that music functions as a developed, quasi-universal language of sentiments, capable of conveying the full range of human feeling through a directed, expandable vocabulary of signs.

However, a tension remains: Rousseau repeatedly warns that codification risks dulling the immediacy of passion (as writing mutes the living voice), whereas Forkel tends to valorize precisely

⁴⁵ eine allgemeine Sprache der Empfindungen ..., deren Umfang eben so gross ist und seyn kann, als der Umfang einer ausgebildeten Ideen-Sprache. So wie nun in der Ideensprache Reichtum an Ausdrücken für alle mögliche Gedanken mit ihren Beziehungen, Richtigkeit und Ordnung in der Verbindung dieser Ausdrücke, und die Möglichkeit, die sämtlichen Ausdrücke nach allen den verschiedenen Zwecken und Absichten, die ein Redender damit verbinden kann, zu biegen und zu gebrauchen, Merkmale ihrer höchsten Vollkommenheit sind; so müssen auch in der Tonsprache 1) Reichtum an Combinationen der Töne, 2) Richtigkeit und Ordnung in den Verbindungen derselben, und 3) gewisser Endzweck, die drey Hauptmerkmale einer wahren, guten und ächten Musik seyn. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik*, (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1788), I.19; trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 67.

the rich combinatorial expansion and disciplined ordering of musical signs as the mark of a mature language. The parallel therefore holds at the level of origin and mechanism—natural signs are the foundation of expression—but Rousseau’s warning about writing is also instructive here: once musical expression becomes “fixed” in notation and conventional usage, it risks a comparable cooling and loss of emotional immediacy. The implication is practical as well as theoretical: musical meaning should be continually reconnected to the passion that conceived it, via an application of its natural signs through embodied delivery, so that the written score does not replace, but rather prompts, a living resurgence of affect.

3.5 Musical Emancipation from Text

Once a universal musical “language of sentiments” is conceived as grounded in impressions of the soul and communicated through natural signs, accompanying text becomes optional rather than necessary. Instrumental music has emancipated itself in this regard from accompanying text. The decisive question therefore shifts: instead of asking whether instrumental music can signify without words, late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century theorists ask how a purely instrumental work can sustain intelligibility and affective coherence on its own terms.

Engel clarifies this implication by arguing that musical painting must remain self-sufficient: it should not require an external sequence of events to render its affective sequence comprehensible. Accordingly, he insists that musical painting does not need to rely on contextual or programmatic features. Namely, “the composer should not want to depict a series of feelings that are dependent on another series of events or contemplations, and whose sequence is incomprehensible or even absurd unless one also thinks of this other series on which the former depends.”⁴⁶ For instance,

A symphony, a sonata, any musical work not supported by speech or mime – as soon as it is to be more than just a pleasant noise, a lovely buzz of tones – must contain a series of sensations such as naturally occur in a passion entirely devoted to one single object, but which of course branches out [and deviates] into manifold sensations. [A single] passion, which, however, naturally branches out [deviates] into manifold sensations, must contain such a series of sensations as develop one after the other in a soul completely immersed in passion, undisturbed from without, and uninterrupted in the free course of its ideas.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ daß der Tonsetzer keine solche Reihe von Empfindungen muß malen wollen, die von einer andern Reihe von Begebenheiten oder Betrachtungen abhängig, und deren Folge unbegreiflich oder gar widersinnig ist, sobald man nicht zugleich diese andere Reihe denkt, von welcher jene eben abhängt. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, p. 322.

⁴⁷ Eine Symphonie, eine Sonate, ein jedes von keiner redenden oder mimischen Kunst unterstütztes musikalisches Werk, - sobald es mehr als bloß ein angenehmes Geräusch, ein liebliches Geschwirre von Tönen seyn soll - muß die Ausführung Einer [einzigen] Leidenschaft, die aber freilich in mannigfaltige Empfindungen ausbeugt [ausweicht], muß eine solche Reihe von Empfindungen enthalten, wie sie sich von selbst in einer ganz in Leidenschaft versenkten, von aussen ungestörten, in dem freien Lauf ihrer Ideen unterbrochenen Seele nach einander entwickeln. Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, pp. 323–24.

For Engel, and as will be shown in Chapter 7, for many of his contemporaries, a self-sufficient instrumental work still needed a sense of *telos* and a logical structuring.

Instrumental music thus underwent a corresponding transformation, evolving from a mere accompaniment to vocal music to fully emancipating itself from it. However, this does not imply that instrumental music lacks a “text.” Instead, it constructs its own sentimental narrative through its unique characteristics. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, d’Alembert and Diderot, both conceded that instrumental music derived meaning through its own means.⁴⁸ In Germany, musical theorists like Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart and Heinrich Christoph Koch shared similar views.⁴⁹ By 1800, the early Romantic poet Friedrich Schlegel described instrumental music as capable of conveying its own text in the imagination of its listeners:

Many a person tends to find it strange and ridiculous that musicians should talk about the thoughts [*Gedanken*] in their compositions; and indeed, it often happens in such a way that one perceives musicians to have more thoughts in their music than about it. But whoever has a sense for the wonderful affinities among all the arts and sciences will at least not consider the issue from the flat perspective of so-called naturalness, according to which music is supposedly only the language of sentiment; and this person will not find it inherently implausible that there is a certain tendency of all purely instrumental music toward philosophy. Must not purely instrumental music create its own text? And is the theme [of an instrumental work] not developed, confirmed, varied, and contrasted in the same manner as the object of meditation in a philosophical sequence of ideas?⁵⁰

Schlegel’s reflection argues that instrumental music possesses an intellectual structure akin to discourse. This resonates with Engel’s and Forkel’s accounts of music as a language. Schlegel extends this idea by asserting music’s capacity for thought-like development and self-contained argument. Together, these perspectives highlight an eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century understanding of music as capable of conveying complex inner feelings and structured ideas without words.

For the rhetorical performer, this insight is crucial. Just as Walker suggested to paint words with sentiment in *hypotyposis*, musical painting was arguably not merely the domain of the composer. The performer, as rhetorician, becomes an active creative agent in the painting process, making use of

⁴⁸ Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 63.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Es pflegt manchem seltsam und lächerlich aufzufallen, wenn die Musiker von den Gedanken in ihren Kompositionen reden; und oft mag es auch so geschehen, dass man wahrnimmt, sie haben mehr Gedanken in ihrer Musik als über dieselbe. Wer aber Sinn für die wunderbaren Affinitäten aller Künste und Wissenschaften hat, wird die Sache wenigstens nicht aus dem platten Gesichtspunkt der sogenannten Natürlichkeit betrachten, nach welcher die Musik nur die Sprache der Empfindung sein soll, und eine gewisse Tendenz aller reinen Instrumentalmusik zur Philosophie an sich nicht unmöglich finden. Muss die reine Instrumentalmusik sich nicht selbst einen Text erschaffen? und wird das Thema in ihr nicht so entwickelt, bestätigt, variiert und kontrastiert, wie der Gegenstand der Meditation in einer philosophischen Ideenreihe? Friederich Schlegel, Athenäums-Fragment 444 in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe*, II, ed. Hans Eichner (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967), p. 254; trans. Mark Evan Bonds in *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 166.

hypotyposis. In service of this goal, the performer seeks to understand the *topoi* of description and how to paint them. As Mattheson defines it, this included examining *thema*, *modus*, and *tactus*—theme, key, and rhythm. Engel correspondingly identifies a list of “painting *topoi*”: the choice of key (major or minor), the tonality (which key specifically), the melody (intervals, pitches, succession), the metre (time signature), the rhythm, the harmony, the choice of voice / instrument, and the dynamics (weak or strong).⁵¹ These parameters serve as expressive directions, guiding the interpreter in discerning the intended sentiment and determining how to bring it to life in performance.

3.6 The Question of Absolute Music

Because music in this view worked by conjuring images in the listener’s imagination, the period saw what Bonds calls the “programmatic” reception of “nonprogrammatic” music. In the period, writers like August Apel, Heinrich Wilhelm Gerstenberg, and composers such as Johann Friedrich Reichardt and Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny associated poetic and picturesque prose with the sentimental narratives of instrumental works by C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, and Haydn.⁵² While Bonds critiques these interpretations as “naïve” attempts to impose meaning,⁵³ such responses arguably reflect the era’s belief that instrumental music could generate its own text in the listener’s imagination through *hypotyposis* enabled by musical painting. Even if these interpretations did not match the composer’s precise intentions, they demonstrate the sympathetic imagination that was central to aesthetic experience. The violinist Pierre Baillot, for example, describes Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 127 with rich, affective imagery in a letter to Prince Galitzin: “You traverse the wilderness, walk along precipices, the night catches you unprepared [...] then you are transported to ravishingly beautiful places.”⁵⁴ Such descriptions show how musical painting can simulate narrative, setting, and emotional shifts purely through sound, creating a psychologically immersive experience. In this view, for the rhetorical performer, this means understanding how musical figures can work descriptively to engage the listener’s sentimental imagination—moving beyond mere imitation to re-animate these expressions through performance techniques.

What about the modern propensity to view late eighteenth-century instrumental music through the aesthetics of “absolute” music, a fundamentally anachronistic approach?⁵⁵ In some characterizations of absolute music reception, music is portrayed as an autonomous, self-sufficient art, which no longer

⁵¹ Engel, „Über die musikalische Malerei“, pp. 309–12.

⁵² See Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, pp. 170–80.

⁵³ Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 172.

⁵⁴ Vous traversez des régions sauvages, vous longez des précipices, la nuit vous surprend, vous vous réveillez et vous êtes transportés dans des sites ravissants; un paradis terrestre vous entoure, le soleil luit radieux pour vous faire contempler les magnificences de la nature. Pierre Baillot to Prince Nikolai Galitzin, quoted in Fabio Morabito, ‘Theatrical Marginalia: Pierre Baillot and the Prototype of the Modern Performer’, *Music & Letters*, 101/2 (2020), p. 295.

⁵⁵ Marcello Ruta, “Absolute Music”, *International Lexicon of Aesthetics* (Spring 2022 edition, first published 31 May 2022), Accessed 21 January, 2026, https://lexicon.mimesisjournals.com/international_lexicon_of_aesthetics_item_detail.php?item_id=109.

relies on a connection to verbal language or rhetoric but operates within its own principles as pure form. Here, musical “meanings” arise solely from formal relations, “unmoored” from rhetorical means like words, images, tones, or embodied gesture. Under such a doctrine, the notion of establishing a musical language of sentiments governed by rhetorical principles would be futile. However, Forkel’s conception of music as an “autonomous” language of sentiments arguably should not be mistaken for a proto-absolute music stance. His view does not align with later formalist ideologies that treat music as self-referential abstraction. Instead, Forkel anchors musical expression in natural signs that are recognizable to listeners through embodied sentimental experience, not formal logic. Here, meaning is conveyed through affective musical painting (which draws on “vocal” tone, movement, and gesture of the body) rather than conceptual semantics. Forkel’s theory thus retains an essential connection to the grammar and structures of verbal language, especially as understood through classical rhetoric. In this model, music’s power comes not from its autonomy but from its capacity to emulate the expressivity of spoken language and embodied performance. The emphasis on natural, affective communication places Forkel firmly within the aesthetics of sensibility, rather than as a precursor to absolute music ideology. His writings, which will be examined throughout this study, affirm that instrumental music, even in its refined late eighteenth-century forms, still depends on the performer’s sensibility, taste, and rhetorical delivery to transform notated gestures into moving experiences. This was the broader *Zeitgeist* of the period: for instance, composers like Georg Joseph Vogler assume that emotions and their natural signs are a set of commonplaces that can be translated into musical *topoi* which choreograph an inner drama for the listener’s imagination. He explored this concept in practice in the composition and commentary for his Overture to the tragedy, *Hamlet* (1778).⁵⁶

Various musicologists such as Bonds argue that applying absolute music reception to music of 1740–1830 is fundamentally anachronistic.⁵⁷ In other words, composers and critics did not generally conceive instrumental music as a hermetic art severed from language or affect; that interpretation was largely imposed by modernist ideologies from the mid-to-late nineteenth century applied backwards to earlier epochs. Chua emphasizes that in the era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, music never truly severed its ties to language, emotion, and social context. He wryly underscores that absolute music “denies that it was ever born” – claiming to be eternal, but in actuality, the doctrine only rose to prominence in the later nineteenth century.⁵⁸ Just as Engel built his most abstract formulations of musical painting upon mimetic processes rooted in embodied gesture and vocal expression, so too would music remain fundamentally relational and communicative. In this view, music cannot be

⁵⁶ For further reading, see Vogler, „Zergliederung der Ouverture zur. Tragödie: Hamlet“, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule*, Bd. 1, pp. 313–37.

⁵⁷ See Mark Evan Bonds, *Idealism and the Aesthetics of Instrumental Music at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century*. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 50, no. 2-3 (1997), p. 387.

⁵⁸ Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1–3.

completely autonomous (in the formalist sense) in any historically meaningful eighteenth-century sense, because its expressive force depends on shared commonplaces—natural signs, intuitive analogies to speech and movement—that link the art of sound to human psychology and lived experience. Because sentimental aesthetics understood music as an art of moving—arousing and shaping passions in the listener—its purpose (*telos*) cannot be treated as self-enclosed or “absolute.” In historically informed performance, this means that the *telos* of sensibility and early Romanticism is received as directed toward an affective end, not as autonomous sound existing purely for itself, and both performers and listeners ought to be acquainted with this paradigm for the rhetorical project to function.

All these examples reinforce that eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music’s “autonomy” was limited; its aesthetic power lay partly in how it engaged the listener’s sympathetic imagination, not in excluding those things in favour of abstract forms. Instrumental music, certainly more flexible than texted music, could more directly apply to the imagination through its ability to describe and depict rather than representatively translate discourse. In the mind of the Romantic, instrumental music was a more effective window into interiority of the soul, but not purely enigmatic. It vitally communicated intersubjectively and resonated with others through commonplaces. For the rhetorical performer, this again implies that music is not merely a set of pure formal structures (as would be the case in absolute music reception), but also expressive oratory, which requires emotional sensibility, imagination, and taste to communicate its content effectively with audiences.

4. Rhetorical Delivery, Expressive Ideologies, Emotional Authenticity, and Modern Expressivity

This chapter turns to a further exploration of expressive ideologies in the performing arts: including oratory and musical performance. Understanding historical expressive ideologies is central to this study because it determines what “expression,” “delivery,” and even “style” were understood to be in the past versus today. Such insights inform the methodology and ideology of this study’s renewed conception of HIP, but they also have important implications for musicology. Without considering the period’s underlying rhetorical assumptions in the aesthetics of sensibility, modern descriptions of eighteenth-century performance aesthetics risk collapsing into either a purely external formalism or a purely modern psychology projected backwards.

Historical aesthetic debates about acting, elocution, and musical rhetoric were centrally concerned with the notion of coupling between inner feeling and outward expression in delivery: how external features might be authentically “inhabited” by sentiment rather than mechanically applied as a code. Consequently, this chapter will examine theories of embodied delivery as it was understood in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In such accounts, strategies for effective delivery deal with managing this dynamic coupling between inner feeling and outward expression as it is mediated through external features. Here, the oppositions between “artifice” and “nature”; “imitation” and “the real thing”; the “performative” and the “genuine”; and the “personally authentic” and the “affected” became a means for understanding the very nature of an effective embodied delivery in itself.

During the age of sensibility, long-standing questions about the relationship between genuine feeling and performed emotion resurfaced with intensity. Rather than a wholly new “crisis,” this question is better understood as a renewed phase in an old debate already addressed by Plato and Aristotle: whether emotions that are not truly felt can nonetheless be performed persuasively, and whether such performances are inherently manipulative.¹ How listeners or spectators might distinguish sincere passion from calculated affectation—from the merely staged display of feeling in voice, gesture, and facial expression—became a central concern. The possibility was frequently raised that unscrupulous rhetoricians—bad actors who are, in fact, “good actors”—could deploy feigned sympathy and counterfeit sentiments in order to exert power over others. In eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century aesthetics, this enduring problem was not merely ethical but also artistic: it informed debates about how performing artists—actors, orators, singers, and instrumentalists—might best give outward form to their inner feelings, and how the movements of these might be coupled or de-coupled.

¹ For further reading, see Conley, *Rhetoric in the European Tradition*, pp. 1–25.

Charles L. Griswold, “Plato on Rhetoric and Poetry”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/plato-rhetoric>.

Christof Rapp, “Aristotle’s Rhetoric” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2010 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2010/entries/aristotle-rhetoric>.

This chapter will also compare historical expressive ideologies with modern ones: including discussions in “acting” in the performing arts and more specific musical cases. Modern accounts often portray “classical” or rhetorical acting styles as techniques built almost entirely out of external features, with little or no inner emotional psychology behind them. In standard typologies of acting, “classical” or representational modes are routinely described as working “from the outside in,” emphasizing codified gesture, posture, and vocal pattern, in contrast to (post)Stanislavskian approaches that privilege inner motivation, genuine emotional experience, and character psychology (an “inside-out” approach.²) For example, in Jens Eder’s *Characters in Film and Other Media: Theory, Analysis, Interpretation* (2025), the historical acting typologies are treated as overly stylized and mannered, making use of conventionalized gestures as opposed to more contemporary approaches.³ Stanislavski himself contrasts the “art of representation” (more fixed, external form) with the “art of experiencing,” where the actor “lives the part” and seeks genuine inner experience on stage.⁴ Within this progress narrative, pre-Stanislavskian performance appears as rigid mannerism: a repertoire of external signs that merely simulates emotion rather than genuinely expressing it.

Such assessments encourage the assumption that rhetorical techniques are inherently “presentational” and superficial—at best a naïve display of feeling, at worst histrionic overacting and tasteless affectation. On this view, classical acting and elocution offer only a façade of affect: an empty virtuosity of signs that can be executed without any genuine inner experience. Similarly, and arguably equally implausibly, musicological discussions of “rational affectivity” often reproduce an analogous image. Eighteenth-century musical expression is sometimes treated as a codified sign language in which specific figures and topics correspond to discrete affects, so that expression becomes the coldly correct deployment of outward musical signs. In such accounts, listeners primarily “read off” stylistic markers, and affective meaning appears to reside more in recognized codes than in intersubjectively shared feeling.⁵

Consequently, the present chapter argues that this cluster of assumptions misrepresents what rhetorical expressivity was understood to be by various writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These modern typologies of historical “rhetorical” expressive ideology tend to paint with a very broad brush, treating earlier practices as monolithically external, without attending to the nuanced aesthetic psychology debated within the culture of sensibility. Such accounts flatten a complex historical discourse into a simple opposition between hollow artifice and modern authenticity. As will

² See Elly A. Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), pp. 25–26.

³ Jens Eder, *Characters in Film and Other Media: Theory, Analysis, Interpretation*, trans. Stephen Lowry in collaboration with Jens Eder (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2025), p. 309.

⁴ For further reading, see Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor’s Work: A Student’s Diary*, trans. and ed. Jean Benedetti (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 44–49, pp. 50–53, p. 63.

⁵ See the Literature Review on p. 15.

be argued in what follows, period embodied delivery designates both the site and the stake of these debates. If delivery is conceived merely as a surface technique, classical rhetorical acting does indeed risk collapsing into inauthentic performativity. If, however, it is understood as a disciplined way of inhabiting and transmitting emotion through the body, then rhetorical techniques become essential tools for making inner states communicable and sharable — tools that arguably concern the musician no less than the actor or orator.

In service of these arguments, this chapter unfolds in four connected parts. It first situates period theories of expression within the aesthetics of sensibility in order to challenge modern typologies of “classical” acting and clarify what period writers themselves understood as credible expression. It then turns to period sentimental acting treatises to show how embodied delivery was conceived in practice. The third part brings these rhetorical strategies into the musical domain, refining the study’s model of the “feeling musician” by showing how analogous forms of delivery operate in music. Finally, the chapter places these period approaches in dialogue with (post)modern expressive ideologies to reveal what later frameworks tend to obscure.

4.1 Examining Period Theories of Personal Expressive Authenticity

4.1.1 Diderot’s Paradox and the Culture of Sensibility

What if an actor were to assume only the external “look” of an emotion—its posture, gesture, and vocal colour—without anything like the corresponding inner feeling? This is the provocation at the heart of Denis Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* (written c. 1773–74, published 1830). Diderot famously proposes that, as paraphrased by Konijn, “a good actor feels nothing at all and can therefore evoke the strongest of feelings in the audience,” and this actor “should act emotions on stage without feeling.”⁶ The most accomplished performer is therefore not the most sensitive, but the one who has completely mastered him/herself, able to “take off his mask and put it back on again on command,” delivering a performance that is controlled, constant, and repeatable, rather than fluctuating with the vagaries of personal emotion.⁷ In sharp contrast to the aesthetics of sensibility—which tended to assume that an actor’s sincerity and “true” feeling would radiate outward into an authentic, moving performance—Diderot aligns great acting with reason, control, and artifice. For him, uncontrolled emotion and rational control are mutually exclusive: once emotion is fully “in control,” it has become pretense by definition.⁸ Extreme sensitivity, he argues, actually undermines consistent artistry. Instead of relying on spontaneous affect, the actor observes emotions in everyday life and constructs a *modèle idéal*—an internal “model” or simulation of the role that distills the most distinctive and universal human traits into a larger-than-life figure and then reproduces this model on stage.

⁶ Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage*, p. 22.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 22–23.

⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

Seen from this angle, Diderot's *Paradoxe* is not simply a provocation against sensibility, but a radical attempt to solve the problem of how inner feeling and outer signs are to be coupled in performance: they are not coupled together at all. Diderot insists that emotions in daily life and emotions on stage belong to "a completely different order": on stage the actor does not imitate reality but acts out an imagined model, which must remain stable enough to be repeated from performance to performance.⁹ In other words, to secure that stability, the actor's bodily and vocal expressions must be governed by a lucid, intellectual control rather than by volatile feeling. The questions raised by the *Paradoxe* apply with equal force to music. Does a musician need to feel the emotions suggested by the music in order to express them convincingly, or can a performer maintain distance, relying on a simulated, methodical "nature;" a prescriptive technique of timing, articulation, and gesture, and still evoke an equivalent response in the listener? Can a performance be programmed as a series of meticulously calibrated external features and yet still give rise to sympathy?

The tension between the actor's inner and outer coupling is given a more nuanced treatment in Lessing's dramaturgy. Lessing first describes the "tremendous gulf" between an actor "who merely understands a passage and one who also feels it."¹⁰ For Lessing, the ideal actor has abundant feeling: one whose "soul must be entirely present; it must direct its attention solely and entirely to its speech, and only then—" Lessing breaks off with a beautiful rhetorical exclamation. For Lessing, the ideal actor is wholly immersed in the emotion being represented: an abundance of inner feeling animates the performance and becomes perceptible to the audience in outward expression. However, he then presents the antithesis: an actor that "can have truly abundant feeling, and at the same time appear to have none."¹¹ Alongside this normative model, Lessing also sketches two less ideal—but common—possibilities. One is the actor who seems to be overflowing with feeling while in fact experiencing little or none. In terms of characters from Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), John Willoughby exemplifies this type. The other is the actor who genuinely feels intensely yet performs behind a mask of restraint, projecting an appearance of indifference rather than allowing that inner affect to register visibly. This would be exemplified by Edward Ferrars in Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. As Lessing notes:

[inner] feeling is undoubtedly always the most questionable. It can exist where one does not perceive it; and one can believe that one sees it where it does not exist. For feeling is something interior, which we can only judge by its outward manifestations. It is quite possible that certain things in the construction of the body either simply do not allow for these manifestations, or they weaken them and render them ambiguous. The actor could have a particular facial structure, particular facial expressions, or a particular tone that we

⁹ Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage*, pp. 23, 25.

¹⁰ Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3, §6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Essay 3, §7.

tend to associate with completely different capacities, different passions, and different sentiments than those he ought to express and demonstrate at a given moment. In such a case, regardless of how much he feels, we will not believe him, because he is in a state of contradiction with himself. On the other hand, a different actor could be so felicitously built, he could possess such decisive features, all of his muscles could respond so easily and swiftly to his command, he could control such fine and varied inflections of his voice – in short, he could be so blessed with all of the gifts necessary for acting in such a high degree that he will appear to us to be inspired by the most profound feeling, even in those roles that he performs not from original inspiration but in imitation of some good example and in which everything that he says and does is really nothing more than mechanical mimicry.¹²

Here, Lessing poses the problem of sentimental coupling between the actor's inner feeling and the outward expression of it. Lessing holds that all actors should project feeling: the problem is not only about whether feeling is present in itself, but how (and whether) it becomes legible, coupled to external signs that audiences interpret as emotional commonplaces.

When examined against Lessing's ideas about actors, Diderot's paradox occupies an ambiguous position. Although written in the 1770s, it did not appear in print until 1830, long after Diderot's death. Since then, the text has generated a substantial secondary literature and is frequently interpreted in later acting theories and modern debates about authenticity. That reception history, however, falls outside the scope of the present study—and, in the context of late eighteenth-century aesthetic discourse, risks importing anachronistic assumptions. What matters here is that the *Paradoxe* was long withheld from publication and appears not to have exerted significant influence on contemporaneous thought within the culture of sensibility. In that milieu, its claims about emotional detachment and the “cold” actor would likely have been regarded as not only contentious, but in many circles, distinctly unwelcome. Konijn concludes that the issue presented by Diderot is “not so much about the distinction between real and unreal emotions,” but about degrees of sincerity—the alignment, or lack of alignment, between outward behaviour and underlying feeling.¹³ The following discussion therefore treats the questions raised by Diderot—rather than their nineteenth- and twentieth-century receptions—within the framework of contemporary aesthetic theories in the later eighteenth century.

4.1.2 Balancing Sense and Sensibility

These debates all converge on the question of inner-outer coupling. Whether siding with Diderot's disciplined detachment, or the aesthetics of sensibility's ideal of sincerity, or with some synthesis of the two, the underlying concern remains the same: how the performer's body and expressive action can become a credible vehicle for emotion without collapsing either into mechanical superficiality or uncontrolled “rhapsodic” enigma. Importantly, examining inner–outer coupling is therefore not a

¹² Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3, §7.

¹³ Konijn, *Acting Emotions: Shaping Emotions on Stage*, p. 95.

merely theoretical exercise. It names the practical problem at the heart of performance: by what means does an audience come to trust an embodied expression as emotionally intelligible?

To ground this problem in the period's own cultural imagination, an illustrative case study can be drawn by turning again to Jane Austen. For instance, the character of John Willoughby in *Sense and Sensibility* (1811) epitomizes the dangers of inauthentic sensibility. Willoughby uses it as a tool to manipulate Marianne Dashwood's genuine sentiments. He presents himself as an ideal romantic hero, rescuing Marianne after her fall, appreciating nature's poetry, and sharing her literary and musical tastes. Despite his shallow and performative sensibility, aimed at securing her admiration rather than expressing genuine feelings, Marianne believes in the authenticity of Willoughby's affections because his behaviour mirrors her idealized notions of love. Willoughby's abrupt departure and subsequent marriage to Miss Grey for wealth reveal his lack of authentic sensibility. His letter to Marianne, filled with cold and indifferent reasoning, exposes his emotional insincerity.¹⁴

However, arguably, Austen critiques both unchecked sensibility in Marianne and excessive sense, as exemplified by her sister Elinor. Elinor embodies restraint, rationality, and social decorum, often suppressing her emotions even in moments of profound personal distress. While her composure shields her from the humiliation Marianne experiences, it also leads to silent suffering, evident in her heartbreak over Edward Ferrars, as her restraint prevents any advancement on that front. By the novel's conclusion, both Marianne and Elinor undergo transformations, demonstrating Austen's central message: neither reasoned control (*sense*) nor *sensibility* alone is sufficient; a balance of both is essential. This concept of balance is effectively conveyed in a conversation between Marianne, Elinor, and Edward in Chapter 18:

"I suspect," said Elinor, "that to avoid one kind of affectation, Edward here falls into another. Because he believes many people pretend to more admiration of the beauties of nature than they really feel, and is disgusted with such pretensions, he affects greater indifference and less discrimination in viewing them himself than he possesses. He is fastidious and will have an affectation of his own."

"It is very true," said Marianne, "that admiration of landscape scenery is become a mere jargon. Every body pretends to feel and tries to describe with the taste and elegance of him who first defined what picturesque beauty was. I detest jargon of every kind, and sometimes I have kept my feelings to myself, because I could find no language to describe them in but what was worn and hackneyed out of all sense and meaning."

"I am convinced," said Edward, "that you really feel all the delight in a fine prospect which you profess to feel. But, in return, your sister must allow me to feel no more than I profess."

¹⁴ Jane Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ed. Edward Copeland, The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Jane Austen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), ch. 29.

I like a fine prospect, but not on picturesque principles. I do not like crooked, twisted, blasted trees. I admire them much more if they are tall, straight, and flourishing. I do not like ruined, tattered cottages. I am not fond of nettles or thistles, or heath blossoms. I have more pleasure in a snug farmhouse than a watch-tower—and a troop of tidy, happy villagers please me better than the finest banditti in the world.”¹⁵

In this view, for Austen, excessive sense leads to as much affectation as excessive sensibility. Edward affects indifference to avoid affecting inauthenticity—yet this is hardly ideal, as he portrays himself as dull, cold, and indifferent as a result. His stance is not a rejection of affectation but another form of it: a self-conscious refusal to display genuine feeling for fear of seeming artificial. However, while excessive artifice is objectionable, equally undesirable is an excess of sensibility. For example, Marianne’s potent sensibility is sometimes portrayed as naïvely laughable, as she delivers a heartfelt rhapsody for dead leaves. It however becomes debilitating when her heart is shattered upon Willoughby’s departure. Her breakdown leaves her utterly despondent, rendering her incapable of functioning at all. Similarly, Goethe’s *Werther* could be viewed as a cautionary tale against the self-destructive nature of excessive sensibility.

In delivery, an excess of sensibility can flood the orator: emotion overwhelms memory and coordination, the text (or score) slips away, mistakes multiply, and expression can collapse into strain—messy, overexerted, even uncontrolled pounding at the keys. Yet an excess of control produces the opposite failure: a technically correct but emotionally inert performance, where cold calculation replaces spontaneous impulse; the delivery becomes safe, tidy, and potentially tedious—its very correctness draining away spontaneity, urgency, and the expressive “fire” of the performance. Striking a balance between control and sensibility will result in a level of spontaneity and realism that audiences find appealing. In other words, what is at stake is whether inner feelings can be held in sufficient equilibrium to inhabit outward expression without either drowning or withdrawing altogether. In this balanced conception, external features become transparent to inward sentiment, rather than masking it on the one hand or being obliterated by it on the other.

Furthermore, Marianne also highlights another risk: the overuse of rhetorical commonplaces. She critiques the “jargon” of the picturesque, a set of worn-out aesthetic formulas that no longer reflect authentic experience. This is *mannerism*: when everyone borrows the same stylized language to describe nature, the words lose their force and collapse into cliché, becoming, in her phrase, “hackneyed out of all sense and meaning.” In such cases, the “jargon,” or the style itself, becomes more important than the inner feeling that ought to speak through it. The orator aims to satisfy the prevailing standards of “taste,” and the external features are applied simply because they are recognised as appropriate, rather than in response to some inner movement. As a result, the signs lose their semantic and affective weight.

¹⁵ Austen, *Sense and Sensibility*, ch. 18.

Through habitual over-application, they harden into a kind of mechanical coldness: gestures, turns of phrase, and tonal inflections that are formally “correct” but inwardly empty, arbitrary, and lifeless: the very same mere “*mechanicus*” or “technician” Mozart disdained in his account of Clementi’s playing at the keyboard.¹⁶ Mannerism in this sense is affectation: a self-conscious display of sentiment that has lost its rhetorical fire, in which formula is mistaken for sincerity and style is no longer the transparent vehicle of feeling. Here, the “cold” external features of “style” have become a substitute for a genuine “warm” inner feeling.

Austen thus shows that both extremes—Edward’s guarded understatement and the overuse of tropes—reveal the same underlying problem: the potential for rhetorical forms to ossify into empty performance when inner-outer coupling is lost. Marianne’s own frustration with not finding language that is “new” or “true” enough to convey her feeling speaks to this anxiety about rhetoric’s limitations. Similarly, while performative choices can be programmed and executed mechanically as a sequence of clichés, it is unlikely that an audience would accept such representations as authentic or emotionally resonant, especially if the audience recognizes the “falseness” of their overuse. As was noted by the keyboardists who saw a gulf between “correctness” and “feeling,”¹⁷ effective delivery cannot only use external features, but must interact with genuine feeling.

Already, the complexities of emotions are challenging to represent convincingly in all their nuances in art, and any imitation will appear spurious next to the “real thing” if any feature is out of place. External expressions can also easily lose the spontaneity and impulsivity that natural, genuine expressions often exhibit, resulting in lifelessness and stiffness. Here, the Sublime is not achieved because the boundary between what is artificial and what is natural (or real) is obvious. Austen’s exchange warns that rhetoric, to succeed, cannot be a substitute for genuine feeling but must be its vehicle. In sum, Austen’s suspicion of both excessive calculation and unchecked feeling here finds a close analogue in eighteenth-century aesthetic theory and sentimental acting discourse, where many writers insist that neither mere rule-following nor raw emotion suffices. Instead, effective performance—whether on the stage, or at the keyboard—emerges from a calibrated coupling of understanding and feeling, in which sensibility is regulated by judgement – or sense.

4.1.3 Corporeal Eloquence

If excessive calculation produces stiffness and affectation, and unchecked emotion risks incoherence, then the central problem becomes practical for the artist: by what means can inner feeling be translated into outward signs that retain the freshness of the “real thing” while remaining shaped, legible, and proportionate to context?

¹⁶ See Chapter 1.4.

¹⁷ See Chapter 1.4.

It is precisely at this junction that Lessing's contribution becomes especially illuminating. Rather than treating the question as a simple opposition between genuine feeling and theatrical craft, Lessing seeks a model of expression in which naturalness is achieved through a disciplined alignment of bodily sign with affective intention. His answer is formulated through a concept he introduces as a possible interpretation of Cicero's "corporeal eloquence" (*körperliche Beredsamkeit*): a coupling of "sense" and "sensitivity," wherein control supplies cold, objective correctness and sensitivity supplies the warm fire of pathos. As Lessing notes:

So with zeal and with dispassion? With fire and with coldness? –

Precisely, with a mixture of both, in which, however, sometimes the one or the other takes precedence according to the nature of the situation. [...] In the one, reason must ignite emotion, and in the other, emotion must cool itself through reason.¹⁸

On the one hand lies sensitivity: "zeal," "fire," or the capacity to be genuinely moved. On the other lies sense: "dispassion," "coldness," or the faculty that supervises, regulates, and situates that feeling. For Lessing's concept of corporeal eloquence working on the body, sometimes reason kindles emotion, and sometimes emotion is tempered by reason.

In practice, Lessing's dramaturgy and pedagogy of acting—shaped by close contact with actors in Leipzig, Hamburg, and elsewhere¹⁹—aims to improve coupling rather than to suppress either pole. First, inner feeling is given primacy: the actor must possess sensitivity, be capable of real "fire." But secondly, that fire must habitually and reflexively flow into communicable external signs: a musically trained voice, noble gesture, comprehensible and plausible timing, etc. The body is schooled so that, under the pressure of passion, it tends to fall not into raw, illegible outburst, but into tasteful, aesthetically heightened, legible forms. In this sense, corporeal eloquence is precisely "nature improved by art": natural fire (sensitivity) kept burning, but channeled and shaped by judgment (sense) into outer expressions that can be shared and understood by others. Hence, Lessing's acting theory aligns comfortably with the sentimental aesthetics of the Bolevian Sublime: the most powerful moments arise when inner natural passion and outward artifice are so tightly coupled that the lines between them blur and the audience perceives both at once—real fire, carried by a beautifully disciplined human frame.

In sum, even if Diderot's *Paradoxe* casts the great actor as all "sense" and no sensitivity, the stark choice between wholly genuine and wholly artificial expression is a false dichotomy. Corporeal eloquence depends on both art and nature: the decisive issue is not the elimination of one term, but the quality of the coupling between inner feeling and outward signs. In this light, embodied delivery in the mode of "corporeal eloquence" unites correctness, artifice, and technique with sensitivity. Trained

¹⁸ Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3, §12–16.

¹⁹ Natalya Baldyga, "Corporeal Eloquence and Sensate Cognition: G. E. Lessing, Acting Theory, and Properly Feeling Bodies in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Theatre Survey* 58, no. 2 (2017), p. 162. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040557417000059>.

patterns of stylized voice, gesture, and posture do not merely display feeling; they render it legible and can also help to kindle, focus, and shape it within the performer's body and imagination. In this view, the rhetorical performer's technique becomes the carrier—and intensifier—of genuine pathos. From this standpoint, the same logic could plausibly apply to musical performance. Arguably, technical discipline is indispensable for mastering an instrument, yet audiences respond to what they perceive as sincere affect communicated through sound—as if the instrument were transparent rather than obstructive. In this sentimental aesthetic, what moves others is the impression of a real emotional presence, a kind of sublime sincerity that seems to transcend artifice even while being produced by it. In the end, rhetorical strategy succeeds only when technique and emotional engagement are held in productive balance.

4.2 Sentimental Acting Theories and Embodied Delivery

Understanding sentimental acting theories is therefore crucial for understanding eighteenth-century oratory more broadly. The same principles of embodied delivery, sympathetic imagination, and codified “natural signs” seemingly underpinned declamation on the stage, as well as musical performance at the keyboard. Various period writers proposed systems of acting grounded in sensibility, sympathetic imagination, and the resultant expressive “natural signs” of the passions. This form of rhetorical acting drew both from principles of music in the training of the voice, and the visual arts in their “look” on stage: facial expressions, attitudes, and gestures. For instance, Lessing viewed acting as an art suspended “between the visual arts and poetry”—borrowing beauty and clarity from painting but imbuing them with life through transitory motion and feeling from the music of poetic recitation.²⁰ These techniques became part of an expressive vocabulary of commonplaces, moderated by a “cultivated” taste, raised through diligent technical study.

On the surface, for various eighteenth-century writers, good declamation consisted of “correct” application of rules. As Sheridan explains, a “just delivery” consists of “a distinct articulation of words, pronounced in proper tones, suitably varied to the sense, and the emotions of the mind; with due observation of accent; of emphasis, in its several graduations; of rests or pauses of the voice, in proper places and well measured degrees of time; and the whole accompanied with expressive looks, and significant gesture.”²¹ But as the above sections have argued, to truly act well meant more than coldly applying such “correct” techniques—it required a profound grasp of the passions themselves and the way they impress psychosomatically, such that orators could “impassion” themselves—that is, deliberately arouse the appropriate passions within their own minds and bodies. In his 1781 treatise on oratory, John Walker unapologetically advised that “those who have not a power of impassioning

²⁰ For further reading, see Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 5; 15 May 1767.

²¹ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 20.

themselves upon reading or expressing some very pathetic passage,” should “turn their studies to some other department of learning, where Nature may have been more favourable to their wishes.”²²

In the following subsections, various eighteenth-century theories of rhetorical delivery are examined as different types of “pathways” for the actor: inside-out, outside-in, and—most importantly—a hybrid circuit that combines both. These pathways will be traced through key sentimental and rhetorical acting theories of the period, showing how different writers imagined the coupling between inner feeling and outward expression.

4.2.1 Inside Out

“Inside-out” acting—beginning from inner feeling and imagination, and only then seeking its outward signs—was a central strand in eighteenth-century sentimental acting theory. In this view, the most convincing delivery arises when the performer first kindles a genuine passion within and then allows gesture and vocal tone to follow as its natural effects. A frequently cited ancient anecdote in sentimental acting theory revolves around the tragic Greek actor Polus, who employed sentimental objects to achieve genuine emotional authenticity in his performances. During his portrayal of Electra, a character known for her mournful lamentations over the urn containing her brother Orestes’ ashes, Polus used an actual urn containing the ashes of his recently deceased son.²³ However, acting from the inside-out can manifest in less extreme forms. Quoting a passage from Quintilian, Walker shows how an orators might impassion themselves through the use of sentimental objects in the imagination:

“Thus,” says Quintilian, “if I complain of the fate of a man who has been assassinated, may I not paint in my mind a lively picture of all that has probably happened on that occasion? Shall not the assassin appear to rush forth suddenly from his lurking-place? Shall not the other appear seized with horror? Shall he not cry out, beg his life, or fly to save it? Shall not I see the assassin dealing the deadly blow, and the defenceless wretch falling dead at his feet? Shall not I figure to my mind, and by a lively impression, the blood gushing from his wounds, his ghastly face, his groans, and the last gasp he fetches?”²⁴

This process involves specific sentimental triggers that will lead the orator along a predetermined emotional trajectory that grows in intensity—a form of *hypotyposis*.²⁵ Rather than merely stating that a man was murdered, the orator is urged to visualize—and thereby perceive and feel—each detail of the narrative with increasing intensity. This technique depends on sympathetic imagination: by mentally picturing each stage of the event in sensuous, affective terms, the speaker generates an emotional realm

²² John Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. II (London: Printed for the Author, 1781), p. 273.

²³ See Gellius, “A noteworthy story about the actor Polus”, *Attic Nights, Volume I: Books 1-5*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Loeb Classical Library 195 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), Book V; pp. 35–37.

²⁴ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. II, pp. 274–75.

²⁵ On *hypotyposis* as a rhetorical figure, see Chapter 2.5 The Poetics of Sensibility.

that becomes psychologically real. In this way, the imagination becomes a pathway to sentiment, stirring the performer's sensibility and preparing the voice, face, and gesture for a compelling delivery.

The ideal sentimental actor was expected to possess experiential knowledge of the emotions—not only how they appeared from the outside, but how they were felt from within. This was explored in the system of Aaron Hill, the English playwright, poet, and occasional manager at Drury Lane, who developed a sentimental acting system in the decades between the 1720s and 1750s. In Hill's system of acting, the imagination is the starting point of all expression, since only this yields delivery that is, in his view, truly natural and personally authentic. As Jed Wentz underscores, Hill treats imagination as the “fountainhead” of good acting: the performer must identify with the passions of the character by seeing, hearing, smelling, and feeling what the character experiences through a supple, responsive imagination, which in turn leads the actor to the sentiments required in each moment.²⁶ In modern terms this resembles an “inside-out” approach, but Hill's method should not be conflated with Stanislavskian psychology: it does not build on elaborate biographical backstories, but on an immediate, sensorial and affective participation in the passions to be expressed.

Hill's method begins by addressing the “two great “formidable Difficulties” of the actor: first, the intellectual and psychosomatic recognition of passions in their full complexity in every section of the sentimental narrative which they perform, and second, the psychosomatic techniques necessary to animate these passions onstage:

1st. – How, (in Every Part) to KNOW the Passions rightly; and *distinguish* them, from One another.

2ndly, – By what Means (the Passion once *distinguish'd*) to assume its active *Image*, and impress it on the *Imagination*.²⁷

To accomplish these, the actor—or rhetorical performer—brings together a range of expressive tools, and channels them through specific mental processes. This begins with exercising the imagination. “The happiest Qualification which a *Player* shoul'd desire” writes Hill, is “to be Master of, is a *Plastic Imagination*.”²⁸ If the actor is a “chameleon;” assuming a multitude of emotional states in sequence, their imagination must be sufficiently malleable to conceptualize each new state as it arrives.

Thus, beginning with such a “plastic Imagination,” Hill outlines the actor's process, wherein actors “impassion” themselves based on the specific passions they animate:

1st, The imagination must conceive a *strong idea* of the passion.

2dly, But that idea cannot *strongly* be conceived, without impressing its own form upon the

²⁶ Wentz, “And the Wing'd *Muscles* into Meanings Fly”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 244.

²⁷ Aaron Hill, *The Prompter*, No. CXVIII, Friday 26 December 1735.

²⁸ Hill, *The Prompter*, No. CXVIII, Friday 26 December 1735.

muscles of the *face*.

3dly, NOR *can* the look be muscularly *stamp'd*, without communicating, instantly, the same impression to the muscles of the *body*.

4thly, The muscles of the body, (brac'd, or slack, as the idea was an active or passive one) must, in their natural, and not to be avoided consequence, by impelling or retarding the flow of the animal spirits, transmit their own conceiv'd sensation, to the sound of the voice, and to the disposition of the gesture.²⁹

Hill's acting process reveals a psychosomatic awareness, where imagination, sensation, and physical response are understood as a tightly knit loop. The actor must begin with an evocative imagination, allowing the strong passion associated to naturally impress itself on the facial muscles, and from there, radiate into the entire body. Crucially, this process depends not on mechanical control or forced effort, but on allowing sentiment to take hold—trusting that sensibility will guide the body (via the nervous system's "animal spirits") organically through the appropriate expressions. The key lies in not obstructing this flow. Hill emphasizes that if the mind distracts or breaks its imaginative concentration, it "retards the animal spirits," interrupting the transmission of sentiment from "soul" to embodied sensation. In such moments, the body's natural, reflexive, or "involuntary" coupling between inner feeling and outward "natural signs" is disrupted: the body no longer follows the emotion reflexively but has to be pushed along by conscious will. The result is detectable artificiality: the actor slips out of character because gesture and tone are no longer the unforced echo of an inward state, but a set of externally managed impositions. True embodied delivery, then, requires the cultivation of a receptive, reflexive, and flexible sensibility—one that can be trusted to let this coupling run its course. The imagination must be free to kindle the passion, and sensibility must be allowed to carry it into the nerves, muscles, and voice without constant interference from calculating thought or extraneous muscular control. Technique prepares and channels the body, but in the moment of performance it is reflexive sensibility that should guide the process, so that inner excitement and outward sign rise and fall together as parts of a single, continuous response.³⁰

²⁹ Aaron Hill, *The works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in four volumes. Consisting of letters on various subjects, and of original poems, moral and facetious. With an essay on the art of acting...* (London: Printed for the benefit of the family, 1753), Vol. 4, p. 356.

³⁰ In her article "Reflections on Historic Acting and the Alexander Technique" (2022), researcher Anne Smith details how this process of "unimpeded" transmission of sentiment from mind to body mirrors key principles of the Alexander Technique, a mindfulness-based somatic method used by many modern performers. Like Hill's process, the Alexander Technique emphasizes releasing habitual muscular tension and fostering bodily awareness, allowing for spontaneous and integrated responses rather than forced or premeditated movements. Smith notes that both systems rely on the actor's ability to allow expression to emerge naturally, rather than compelling it, aligning physical action with a freely directed emotional and imaginative state. See Anne Smith, "Reflections on Historic Acting and the Alexander Technique", *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, pp. 65–9.

When delivering a discourse, the orator is confronted by the delivery of a sequence of ideas. This certainly applies to sentimental narrative, where the whole “impassioning” process must be applied to every passion and transition found within a text. Hill explains the actor’s process with an example:

his *Look* receives the Impression and communicates Affliction to his *Air*, and his *Utterance*.
– Anon, in the same Speech, perhaps the Poet has thrown in a Ray or two, of Hope: At This, the Actor’s *Eye* shou’d suddenly *take Fire* and invigorate with a *Glow* of *Liveliness*, both the *Action*, and the *Accent*: till, a *Third* and *Fourth* Variety appearing. He stops short, upon *pensive* Pauses, and makes *Transitions* (as the Meanings vary) into *Jealousy*, *Scorn*, *Fury*, *Penitence*, *Revenge* or *Tenderness*! All, kindled at the Eye, by the Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*, and APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*, to the very *Instant* of the *changing Passion*.³¹

For Hill, the actor’s appearance (look) and vocal delivery are received through the “Ductility of a *Flexible Fancy*,” that imaginative faculty which the actor uses to conceive the sentiments. Hence, they can transit through the sentimental narrative, “APPROPRIATING *Voice* and *Gesture*” as each passion and transition occurs. Hence, in Hill’s pedagogical materials for acting, such as his *Essay on the Art of Acting* (1753, published posthumously) the flexibility of the imagination is exercised and strengthened through a series of transitions to function flexibly, arriving at specific emotional “waypoints,” dwelling in them for a moment as the text required, then transitioning to the next. This requires the actor to allow their imagination to become more susceptible to emotions.

This process of stepping through each sentiment in the narrative itself demands some scrutiny. In *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (1806), Gilbert Austin explains that each idea in the disposition of a discourse must “appear to the hearers to arise in the speaker’s mind in succession.” But this is not only a manner of appearance, for each idea must actually arise within the mind of the orator in that moment as they deliver their discourse, with all the incumbent sentiments, especially when the orator “pronounces a premeditated, or reads a written discourse.”³² Consequently, the orator:

himself will be excited, and the interest he feels, however rapidly he may proceed, will discover itself at each different period [...] The thought which arises in his mind will instantly be seen in his countenance, and first in his eyes, which it will brighten or suffuse, then suitable gestures follow, and last the words find utterance.³³

Austin shows insight into the natural order of inward to outward expression—a process fundamentally aligned with the empirical workings of the body, mind, and emotions. This has practical ramifications, as the eye is used specifically to visualize the sentimental objects and events themselves. This is part of

³¹ Aaron Hill, *The Prompter* LXVI (June 27th, 1735).

³² Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 380.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

hypotyposis, such that orators descriptively “paint” the scenes they describe first with their eyes, face, gesture, attitude, and eventually words, placing all the sentimental objects of a scene into a physical frame of reference. Hence, movements of the eye often accompany new thoughts, ideas, and perceptions, as the orator receives new impressions.³⁴

To summarize the inside-out approach, imagination first kindles the idea, which then impresses itself on the muscles of the face and body, generating the vocal and gestural responses that communicate the passion. Austin emphasizes that even in scripted discourse, this process must be preserved to maintain the illusion—which quickly becomes the reality—of spontaneity. Austin emphasizes that the key is not mechanical reproduction but a natural unfolding of sentiments: each idea must be animated and genuinely pass through the orator’s imagination and affective faculties in order to produce authentic expression, even if they are triggered by the demands of a script rather than by nature. This principle is especially crucial in contexts where the orator—or by analogy, the musician—is bound to a fixed sequence of ideas, such as a speech or a notated musical composition. If each idea is not truly reimagined and emotionally inhabited in real time, wherein each new inner feeling is methodically coupled to an external feature, the performer risks falling into affectation or mechanical habit, ploughing forward through the motions of the emotions without actually grasping them in the moment. By definition, this is a loss of coupling, as the external features of the emotions have lost their connection to an inner impulse. In this view, artifice now supersedes nature, and sublimity is likely compromised. Austin’s insistence highlights that this order is not merely theatrical artifice—it is the order of nature itself. To follow it is to remain true to the organic rhythm of sentiment and expression; to ignore it is to sever the connection between imagination and expression, and ultimately, between orator and audience.

4.2.2 Tempo, Emotional Inertia and Transition

Various writers in the eighteenth century identify the notion of tempo in delivery as vitally connected to the expression of sentiments and the way they unfold in a narrative. In this view, every passion has a characteristic embodied tempo as a natural sign. The doleful trudging and weighty glances of grief contrast greatly with the blissful skipping of rapture, or the threatening gait of frenzied rage. In music, like oratory, the choice of tempo reflects the expressed sentiment. According to Türk, “the most excellent composition has little to no effect, when it is performed in a noticeably wrong tempo.”³⁵ Likewise, finding the right tempo is a matter of “judgement united with personal and proper feeling.”³⁶ Presumably, Türk implies an understanding of how to embody the prevailing affect. Comparably, in his essay on *musikalisches Malerey*, Engel describes how certain types of embodied expressions each have

³⁴ On the use of the eye in historical acting, see the case study 10.2 The Timing and Stroke of Gesture on p. 268.

³⁵ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 109.

³⁶ Ibid.

a different emotional weight which create feelings of lightness, heaviness, regularity of flow, and discontinuity in music:

Sublime ideas are of much weighty content: the gait is slow; happy ideas are of easily comprehensible content: the gait is lively, the leaps not great; fear works its way with great speed, but interruptedly, through a multitude of unhappy ideas; melancholy creeps with slow and lingering steps through ideas that are in close connection.³⁷

Engel's notion of how inner feeling connects to tempo variation follows from the arguments about coupling—how inner feeling and outward sign must move together rather than separately—so embodied delivery could be understood as a matter of motion and weight in time. Arguably, when this temporal weighting is successful, the crafted pattern of pauses, inflections, and movements no longer appears as artificial calculation, but as the necessary rhythm of feeling itself.

Due to the time ideas take to unfold in the mind and body, the consequent timing of embodied delivery in the transition between sentiments is influenced by what might be called *emotional inertia*—the natural pacing and momentum of sentiments as they emerge, evolve, and dissipate. In this view, just as a heavy object in motion takes time to slow or change direction, powerful emotions, once in motion, require space and pacing to transition with sincerity and plausibility. Arguably, moving from joy to sorrow is not a simple matter of switching facial expressions or tempi; it is a transition from lightness to heaviness “in the soul,” and such a shift, if rushed, feels abrupt and artificial. Similarly, the body must be given time to process and express the changing emotional states, just as the mind must be granted the chance to experience them in sequence. Hill underscores this point in his pedagogical poem, *The Actor's Epitome* (1735):

Spread, *be your opening* Breast; *oft* chang'd, *your* Face:
Step, *with a slow* SEVERITY of Grace.
Pausingly WARM, (*Significantly*) rise;
*And Affectation's empty SWELL despise.*³⁸

For Hill, the actor will find the natural expression of a passion through the natural tempo of the body itself under the influence of a passion: which dictates the poignant pauses and *rubato* incumbent in a moving delivery, whilst disdaining the “empty SWELL” of affectation. Hill also warns against speaking with rigid temporal regularity or ‘metronomically’ in his later explanation of “*pausingly* WARM:”

³⁷ so sind erhabne Vorstellungen von vielem schweren Inhalt: der Gang ist langsam; fröhliche Vorstellungen sind von leicht faßlichem Inhalt: der Gang ist munter, die Sprünge nicht groß; Angst arbeitet sich mit großer Geschwindigkeit, aber unterbrochen, durch eine Menge mißhelliger Ideen hindurch; Wehmuth schleicht mit langsamen und verweilenden Schritten durch Ideen fort, die in nahen Verbindungen stehen. Engel, “Über die musikalische Malerei”, p. 315.

³⁸ Aaron Hill, *The Prompter*, No. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

TO *pause*, as some Actors do, at the End of Each Word or two, is to speak, like the Minute Hand of a *Clock*, that measures TIME, not MEANING.—All the *Pauses*, in Utterance [...] serve to *mark out the Sense*, and give Harmony and Force, to the *Cadence*: and, to do This effectually, the Pause, in the SOUND, must be accompanied with *no* Pause in the ACTION: but fill'd out, by such agitated Perturbation, in the *Look*, and the *Gesture*, as may (instead of *interrupting* the Course of the Passion) seem but the *Struggling*, of its inward *Emotion*; *preparing* for the *Utterance* of What arises to the *Conception*.³⁹

Hill's image of the actor who "speaks, like the Minute Hand of a Clock, that measures TIME, not MEANING" is a sharp warning against mechanically regular "metronomic" delivery. For him, pauses and temporal inflections are not neutral gaps in sound; they "mark out the Sense, and give Harmony and Force, to the Cadence," and must be "fill'd out" by an inner agitation that continues to work in the look and gesture during the silence. The pause in sound should be no pause in passion, but rather the visible "Struggling, of its inward Emotion; preparing for the Utterance of What arises to the Conception."

Here, Hill suggests that meaningful tempo rubato is central to rhetorical delivery. A strictly metronomic tempo measures only time, not meaning; it severs the coupling between inner movement and outer sign. By contrast, rubato that grows out of emotional inertia, agogic stresses, and flexible pauses both clarifies structure—marking the "Sense" and strengthening cadences—and, more importantly, embodies the working of the passions. The transitions must be prepared from within, as sentiment builds, hesitates, or surges, and then carried through the body and sound in their own natural rhythm.

Similarly, Lessing describes the actor's transition from a "tumult" to a more collected "reflection" when recalling a moral truism:

When the soul seems to collect itself suddenly in a tumultuous situation in order to reflect upon itself or its circumstances, then the soul will naturally control all movements of the body that are subject to its will. Not only will the voice quiet down; but the limbs will also fall into a relaxed state in order to express that inner calm without which the eye of reason cannot look around. All at once, the advancing foot stands fast, the arms sink, and the entire body gathers itself into equilibrium. A pause – and then comes reflection. The man stands there in solemn silence, as if he doesn't want to hinder himself from hearing himself. Then the reflection is over – another pause – and then, depending on whether the reflection directed him either to temper or to ignite his passions, he either suddenly breaks out, or only gradually sets his body in motion again. The evidence of emotion remains only on the face during the reflection; the facial expression and the eyes remain in motion and on fire, because we do not have sudden and complete control over countenance and eyes the way

³⁹ Hill, *The Prompter*, No. CXIII, Tuesday, December 9th, 1735.

we do over feet and hands. And so it is here, in the telltale expressions, in these burning eyes and in the utter composure of the rest of the body, that the mixture of fire and coldness is found with which I believe a moral truism can be conveyed in an intense situation.⁴⁰

Lessing is explicitly talking about embodied delivery, but his language maps seamlessly onto musical gesture, motion, dynamics, and pacing (tempo, agogics, and rubato). The body of Lessing's actor responds to the inner sentiment of the soul, and the actor's outward voice and motion express themselves accordingly coupled to this sentiment. When the "soul collects itself," he writes, the body suddenly stills: the voice quiets, limbs relax, the advancing foot stops, the whole figure comes into equilibrium, then pauses. Only after this inward gathering does movement resume—either in a sudden outburst or in a gradual rekindling. The "pause – and then comes reflection" corresponds to a caesura, fermata, agogic emphasis, or moment of suspense so that the listener can "hear" the character thinking. Translated into musical terms, this is exactly the logic of rubato and dynamic shaping: strong affects have emotional inertia and need time to dissipate, turn, or flare up again.

Hence, emotional inertia could have profound implications for embodied delivery in musical performance. Taken in this view, like actors immersed in emotion, musicians engaged in this mode of delivery would not be able to weightlessly execute cold switches from one affect to another. Instead, they could feel the transitions such that this psychologically shapes their outward manifestation, allowing emotional inertia to exert its weight. This honours the natural tempo and weight of each idea.

For example, assuming this view, if a sudden modulation accompanies an abrupt transition of affect, it should be handled so that its pacing is plausible in terms of emotional inertia. Furthermore, devices such as tempo rubato and agogic inflection could then be used to shape the transition—devices that arise convincingly arguably only when the transition is genuinely felt and when inner change and outer sign are tightly coupled. If performers short-circuit this internal process—dropping in effects from the outside rather than letting them grow out of inward excitation—expression quickly risks sounding crafted rather than felt. Worse still, if performers begin to manipulate timing and rhythm arbitrarily—out of caprice, habit, or slavish imitation, the likely result is mannerism in the strict sense: a jargon of expressivity that no longer carries its original emotional charge. Within this aesthetic framework, audiences, whose own sensibility is attuned to the congruence (or lack of it) between inner and outer, will register this mismatch instinctively. They may admire the variety, the ingenuity, even the virtuosity of the surface, but they will sense that something essential is missing: the signs do not seem inhabited. Again assuming the aesthetic framework of sensibility, in such circumstances, expression may be stylish, even impressive, but it will not rise to the level of the Sublime, because it lacks the depth and credible coupling that make heightened gestures more than decorative display.

⁴⁰ Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3, §19.

4.2.3 Outside In

Hill, and others in the period, realized that the imagination sometimes needed assistance. For example, Walker admits that for actors and orators, “the woes of others, whether real or fictitious, will often make but a weak impression on our mind,” and “will fail of affecting us with a sufficient force to excite the same emotions in the minds of hearers.”⁴¹ The actor often has “a fictitious or absent passion to exhibit,” and “must produce his passion at a certain time or place, and in a certain order.”⁴² In such circumstances, born from pragmatism, other methods to reliably impassion must be employed. Hill’s system, relying on psychosomatic links, uses the body to “kickstart” the “Mazy Round:” what is often termed today as acting from “outside in.”⁴³ To demonstrate this process, Hill quotes the following evocation of anger in Shakespeare’s *Henry V*, where the eponymous king seeks to rouse his troops to violence before a battle:

Now, imitate the action of the tiger:
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood;
Lend fierce and dreadful aspect to the eye:
Set the teeth close, and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath, and bend up every spirit,
To its full height –⁴⁴

Walker similarly comments on these lines: “who can read these admirable descriptions of anger without finding his whole frame braced, and his mind strongly tintured with the passion delineated!”⁴⁵ The imitation of affect, through muscular action and gesture, kindles the corresponding feeling in the soul if the performer allows it to—if they do not, as Hill warns, let rational faculties interfere and “retard the animal spirits.”

Lessing likewise describes a novice actor who, while becoming more experienced, gradually transitions from an “outside-in” approach to a more complex circuit:

This actor, notwithstanding his indifference and coldness, is without question far more useful to the theater than the other. Once he has spent enough time doing nothing more than simply mimicking others, he will have acquired a number of little habits according to which he will begin to behave. And (according to the principle that those modifications of the soul that bring about certain changes in the body can in return be produced by those changes to the body) through observation of those rules, he will attain a kind of emotion that, to be sure, may not have the duration or fire of that which arises from the soul but which is powerful

⁴¹ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. II, p. 275.

⁴² Ibid., p. 275.

⁴³ Wentz, “And the Wing’d Muscles into Meanings Fly”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 244.

⁴⁴ Aaron Hill, *The works of the late Aaron Hill, Esq; in four Volumes. consisting of letters on various subjects, and of original poems, moral and facetious. With an essay on the art of acting* Vol III, 2nd edition (London: Printed for the benefit of the family, 1750), p. 370.

⁴⁵ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. II, p. 284.

enough in the moment of performance to bring about some of the involuntary changes in the body from whose presence alone we believe we can dependably infer a person's inner feelings. Imagine, for example, that this kind of actor is supposed to convey anger's most extreme fury. Suppose that he does not really understand his role, that he is neither able to comprehend the reasons for the anger sufficiently nor to imagine them vividly enough to inspire anger in his own soul. Nevertheless, I maintain that if he has learned even the crudest expressions of anger from an actor with native sentiment and knows how to imitate them well – the quick pace; the stamping foot; the raw, now shrieking, now grim tone; the play of eyebrows; the trembling lips; the grinding of teeth, etc. – I repeat, if he imitates just these things that can be mimicked and he does so well, then his soul will without question be overtaken by a dark feeling of anger, which will then in turn provoke a reaction in the body and bring about those changes that cannot be controlled by our will: his face will glow, his eyes will flash, his muscles will swell; in short, he will seem to be truly enraged, without actually being so – without understanding in the least bit why he ought to be so.⁴⁶

Lessing's account converges strikingly with the conclusions of Hill and Walker, even though he comes at the problem from a different angle. Like them, he assumes a psychosomatic coupling between inner feeling and outward "natural signs": what begins as imitation of another's expressive vocabulary gradually ceases to be merely external. The novice actor, by repeatedly copying the "quick pace; the stamping foot; the raw, now shrieking, now grim tone; the play of eyebrows; the trembling lips; the grinding of teeth," acquires a repertoire of habits that, in someone endowed with sensibility, can no longer remain purely mechanical. Because a person of sensibility is naturally responsive to the sounds, tensions, and kinesthetic sensations associated with anger, these outward forms eventually awaken what Lessing calls a "dark feeling of anger," which then in turn produces the involuntary bodily changes by which genuine feeling is normally recognized. The coupling is still present; it simply runs "backwards," from body to soul, and its strength depends on how responsive that person's sensibility is to such cues. This situation could be analogous to a musician who starts "cold" but attacks a dark, violent chord: if that musician has sensibility, the sonority's weight and colour can jolt the performer into the appropriate mood, so that subsequent phrasing, tone, and gesture are guided by an awakened inner agitation rather than by calculation alone. In this way, Lessing's model preserves the importance of technique and commonplaces, which have a latent power on their own, while allowing for the possibility that, in a responsive performer, repeated outside-in work can eventually tip into an inside-out, genuinely sentimental mode of expression.

Lessing thus offers something like a "fake it till you make it" model: intelligently controlled commonplaces can, when practiced, tip over into real, embodied *pathos*. Here, the coupling runs in both directions: outward signs spark inner feeling, which in turn refines and charges those signs. In this

⁴⁶ Lessing, *The Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 3, §8.

sense, corporeal eloquence is not merely a semiotics of gesture but a program for training the body to become eloquent—shaping posture, voice, and movement so that the “natural signs” of passion are rendered clearer, more beautiful, and more moving. As the scholar Natalya Baldyga emphasizes, Lessing’s aesthetics is concerned with forming “properly feeling bodies”: performers whose sensibility and bodily habits have been schooled so that inner feelings do not erupt in raw, illegible form, but tend to couple themselves with signs that are both recognizable and aesthetically heightened.⁴⁷ Without this training, a performer might feel real anger yet transmit almost nothing. For example, the face could remain blank, the posture slack, the voice monotone, or else the response is diffuse—aimless pacing, random arm-flailing, nervous laughter—so that spectators register agitation but not which passion, or in what degree. Similarly, a musician may genuinely feel turmoil, but if this only produces unfocused rushing or harsh tone, the emotion is not so much communicated as scrambled. Lessing’s conception of corporeal eloquence is meant to correct such faulty couplings. Through rehearsal, this tasteful coupling can become reflexive, so that the actor’s first instinct, under the pressure of sentiment, is to fall into expressive patterns that are both “natural” and artistically shaped.

4.2.4 The Mazy Round

The two processes of sentimental activation—inside-out and outside-in—both play important roles in the performer’s expressive toolkit, but they differ in effectiveness and immediacy. The inside-out method, which begins in the imagination, is always preferred for Hill, Walker, Lessing, and Austin because it aligns with the natural order of psychosomatic response: the idea arises in the mind, and this mental image impresses itself onto the body, igniting the voice, face, and gesture. As Hill and Austin stress, this is the most natural and persuasive form of delivery, because it ensures that each sentiment flows out and couples organically from mental conception to bodily expression. The outside-in method, by contrast, begins with muscular or gestural imitation and hopes to awaken emotion through the body’s connection to the mind. This method can be useful, particularly in emergencies or moments of artistic blockage, but it always lags behind—the performer reacts to what they are trying to simulate and thus risks decoupling inner feeling and outward sign. In the worst case, it could become stiff, mannered, and affected.

Nevertheless, sentimental theorists also acknowledge that human sensibility is “messy”: in actual practice, inner and outer continually leak into one another. Once sensibility is allowed to run its course, feelings are kindled even by small stimuli, and this feeling inevitably shapes delivery. This bleeding is not a flaw, as sentimental writers embrace it as the lived reality of felt expression: what matters is cultivating a responsive, natural coupling in which inner movement and outward sign can cooperate, correct, and intensify one another. As Wentz observes, Hill’s acting system presupposes a loop: the actor must know both the external features of a passion and its inner feeling, so that outward

⁴⁷ Baldyga, “Corporeal Eloquence and Sensate Cognition”, pp. 163–65.

expression can be animated by an informed, sympathetic sense of what the emotion is like to experience. As Wentz underscores, Hill's system

relied on the close interconnection of imagination, affect and muscular activity in the closed-system labyrinth of the actor's body – which Hill called 'the mazy Round'. The actor could start either from the mind or the body, which made acting easy, pleasant and natural.⁴⁸

Hill's concept of "the mazy Round" captures the reciprocal nature of sentimental acting theory, where imagination, emotion, and physical expression continuously feed into each other in a circuit. The interaction of these feedback pathways can thusly create what this study terms "sentimental amplification." When a person of sensibility allows his/herself to be susceptible, this amplification intensifies emotional experience via a feedback loop. In 1781, Walker describes this process using a musical analogy for orators:

certain sounds naturally produce certain bodily agitations, similar to those produced by the passions, and hence, music has power over the mind, and can dispose it alternately to joy, or sorrow; to pity, or revenge. When the voice, therefore, assumes the tone which a musician would produce in order to express certain passions or sentiments in a song, the speaker, like the performer on a musical instrument, is wrought upon by the sound he creates; and though active at the beginning, at length becomes passive, by the sound of his own voice on himself. Hence, it is, that though we frequently begin to read or speak, without feeling any of the passions we wish to express, we often end in full possession of it.⁴⁹

According to Walker, the mind, through the senses, resonates with what it perceives. It can be "wrought upon" to become sensitively susceptible to a passion. For example, an orator hearing his/her own voice in a tone of sadness can make him/her even sadder. Likewise, the sensation of clenching fists and tensing muscles, as if in anger, can give a rush of energy that can be driven into real feelings of anger. When focused carefully, such feedback can produce increasingly intensive emotional experience. Walker's observation aligns closely with Hill's "Mazy Round."

Corporeal eloquence can be understood as a way of intensifying this loop. By training "properly feeling bodies," Lessing's program aims not only to strengthen the internal coupling (so that genuine sentiments arise more readily and coherently), but also to refine the external signs through which those sentiments are communicated. Taste and habit shape raw impulses into clearer, more concentrated, and more aesthetically compelling gestures, postures, and tones. In terms of the feedback model, this reduces "damping" of intensity: instead of half-formed or confused signals that weaken the emotional circuit, the rhetorician sends out sharp, legible cues that are more likely to resonate both in the spectator and in his/her own sensibility. Each well-formed sign returns as a stronger stimulus, further exciting the

⁴⁸ Wentz, "And the Wing'd Muscles into Meanings Fly", *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 244.

⁴⁹ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. 2, pp. 279–80.

inner state that produced it. Corporeal eloquence, then, is a way of making the sentimental loop more efficient and more powerful.

4.3 The Feeling Musician

In a 1796 letter to Johann Andreas Streicher, Ludwig van Beethoven proposes that a player could only truly “sing” on the pianoforte once they have feeling (“*sobald man nur fühlen kan[n]*”).⁵⁰ To contextualize remarks of this kind, the foregoing account of rhetorical delivery provides a concrete way to introduce the figure of the “musician of feeling” or “feeling musician”: the ideal sensitive performer envisaged by many period theorists working within the aesthetics of sensibility, for whom outward execution is inseparable from inward feeling, and whose delivery translates embodied sentiment into persuasive musical speech. Culturally, this figure is the musical analogue of the “man of feeling,” and in more specifically rhetorical terms, of the sentimental actor. In this view, the feeling musician does not merely apply expressive devices from the outside—dynamics, tempo changes, articulations—as pre-programmed ornaments to an otherwise neutral execution. Rather, these devices arise from sensibility: from the performer’s capacity to receive the sentiments encoded in the work, to re-live them imaginatively and bodily, and to let that inner movement shape delivery in real time responding to both *telos* and *kairos*. The imagination and the body become the medium through which a sequence of affects is communicated to the listener as a credible, shared experience. Based on such accounts, the performer’s voice, body, and instrumental action do not merely project emotion; they also act as stimuli that feed back into the performer’s own sensibility via Hill’s Mazy Round. Each phrase and gesture is both an expression and a fresh provocation to feel. This self-affecting loop embodies the sentimental ideal: beginning with intention and artifice but arriving at authentic experience through embodied delivery.

In such a model, the feeling musician needed inner feeling to start this circuit. For example, the Kapellmeister Joseph Fröhlich wrote in 1811:

To perform a piece of music cannot mean anything else than to present a series of sentiments [...] to the ear of the listener. A correct performance thus presupposes that the performing artist, on the one hand, has understood the entire piece, and, on the other, is able to re produce it. The musician must accordingly feel...the very same, or at least a similar series of sentiments as did the composer.⁵¹

⁵⁰ ich freue mich lieber, daß sie von den wenigen sind, die einsehen und fühlen, daß man auf dem Klawier auch singe[n] könne, sobald man nur fühlen kan[n] ... Ludwig van Beethoven, ‘Beethoven an Johann Andreas Streicher’, [Wien, vielleicht August/September 1796], in Sieghard Brandenburg (ed.), *Ludwig van Beethoven: Briefwechsel. Gesamtausgabe* (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 1996–98), *Henle-Brieftexte* (Beethoven-Haus Bonn), Accessed 27 January 2026, <https://brieftext.beethoven.de/henle/letters/b0022.phtml>.

⁵¹ Ein Tonstück vortragen kann nichts anders heissen, als eine von dem Tonsetzer gegebene Folge von Empfindungen (denn das sollte jedes Tonstück seyn) vor das Ohr des Zuhörers bringen. Ein richtiger Vortrag setzt also voraus, dass der darstellende

For Fröhlich, musical performance was firstly about sentimental storytelling—the sequencing of sentiments in a narrative—and secondly, a form of re-enactment, closely internalizing and re-animating the sentiments that the composer felt in the imagination and body of the performer. This process, in the idealized case, functioned on genuine sentiment, formed through interpreting the external features in the score, but rendered in real-time during delivery.

Arguably, the instrumentalist had an additional imperative: to transcend the materiality of instrument and unite with it, such that it expresses what the body expresses, giving it a vitality to project the inner feelings of the musician. Playing a musical instrument is an inherently physical act as instruments respond to how the body activates them. Arguably, embodying emotions, including muscle tensions and somatic experiences, will directly impact the sound produced, and hence, impact the musician’s ability to interact with the instrument in both positive and negative ways. Hence, this negotiation is an important consideration. As philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel notes, the instrument itself remains “an external matter, a dead thing, while music is inner movement and activity.”⁵² However, “if the externality of the instrument disappears altogether, i.e. if inner music penetrates this external reality through and through, then in this virtuosity the foreign instrument appears as a perfectly developed organ of the artistic soul and its very own property.”⁵³ The instrument, as Hegel puts it, is by nature “a dead thing”—a physical object incapable of expression on its own. But in the hands of a feeling musician engaged in embodied delivery, the instrument has become a part of the coupling: it responds directly to an embodied delivery, coupled to the inner feelings expressed through it, giving it animation and becoming an organ of the body itself.

As Hill noted, emotional impulse was conveyed through the nerves to the muscles by the animal spirits.⁵⁴ The effective actor should avoid retarding these impulses such that the body responds to emotion reflexively. Assuming this notion, Hegel’s instrumentalist, whose instrument has become a further extension of the body, conveys this same impulse into the instrument itself. Yet the analogy also clarifies the instrumentalist’s distinctive problem: because sound must pass through a resistant material object—strings, plectra, hammers, and/or keys—the impulse cannot be transmitted raw without mediation. If the performer “lets go” entirely, the instrument will faithfully amplify not only affect, but also excess. Conversely, if the performer habitually checks, filters, and over-regulates every muscular

Künstler einer Seits das ganze Stück gefasst habe, anderer Seits es wiederzugeben wisse. Der Tonkünstler muss also... die nämliche, oder doch wenigstens eine gleiche Folge von Empfindungen wie der Tonsetzer selbst fühlen, Joseph Fröhlich, *Vollständige Theoretischpractische Musikschule für alle beym Orchester gebräuchliche wichtigere Instrumente* (Bonn: 1811), p. 48. trans. Tilman Skowronek in Bania, *Becoming Beethoven*, p. 39.

⁵² bleiben überhaupt eine äußerliche Sache, ein totes Ding, während die Musik innerliche Bewegung und Tätigkeit ist.” Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, 221. Trans. Knox, *Hegel’s Aesthetics*, p. 957.

⁵³ Verschwindet nun die Äußerlichkeit des Instrumentes durchaus, dringt die innere Musik ganz durch die äußere Realität hindurch, so erscheint in dieser Virtuosität das fremde Instrument als ein vollendet durchgebildetes eigenstes Organ der künstlerischen Seele. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, vol. I (Berlin: 1835), p. 221; trans. T. M. Knox, *Hegel’s Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), vol. II, p. 957.

⁵⁴ See Chapter 4.2.1.

response, the chain of impulse is delayed at its source; the instrument still sounds, but the result can become correct yet overly calculated and potentially emotionally inert. The aim, then, is not for technique to suppress impulse but to shape it into a reliable channel, so that emotion can pass into sound without losing clarity. In this sense, much like corporeal eloquence, discipline and technique are not the enemy of embodied delivery; they are what make it possible for feeling to appear as intelligible, intentional musical oration. When the body has been trained so that touch, timing, and gradations of effort operate reflexively in response to what is felt, the performer no longer experiences technique as an external brake, but as the very means by which inward movement becomes audible outward expression. At that point Hegel's ideal—where “inner music penetrates” the instrument “through and through”—can be understood as a practical physiological-aesthetic state: the nervous impulse finds an unblocked pathway into the hands, and the instrument responds accordingly and appropriately.

As in sentimental acting, eighteenth-century theorists drew inspiration from the adage attributed to Horace in his *Ars Poetica*: “If you would have me weep, you must first feel grief yourself.”⁵⁵ As was already stated in the Introduction of this study, this idea is famously shared by C.P.E. Bach in his *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (1787, 3rd edition). Turning now to the full quotation:

the musician cannot move others unless he himself is moved, he must necessarily be able to put himself in all the emotions he wishes to arouse in his listeners; he conveys his feelings to them and thus best moves them with sympathy. In dull and sad passages, he becomes dull and sad. One can see and hear this in him. Here, one must beware of the mistake of being overly sleepy and sluggish. It is easy to fall into this trap through too much emotion and melancholy. This also happens with violent, cheerful, and other kinds of thoughts, where he then puts himself in these emotions. No sooner has he calmed one than he arouses another, thus constantly alternating between passions. He observes this duty in general in pieces that are expressive, whether they originate from himself or from someone else; in the latter case, he must feel the same passions that the author of the foreign piece felt when composing it. In particular, however, the keyboardist can master the minds of his listeners in all kinds of ways through fantasies from his head. Only those who are forced by their insensitivity to sit like a carved statue in front of the instrument will deny that all this can be done without the slightest gesture. As indecent and harmful as ugly gestures are, good ones are useful in helping us to convey our intentions to the audience. The latter performers, despite their skill, often bring bad honour upon their otherwise not bad pieces. They do not know what is in them because they cannot bring it out. But when such pieces are played by someone else who possesses tender feelings and has mastered good performance, they discover with

⁵⁵ si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi. Horace. *Satires. Epistles. The Art of Poetry*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 194 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 458.

amazement that their works contain more than they knew and believed. From this we see that good performance can elevate even a mediocre piece and win it applause.⁵⁶

Here, Bach's ideal performer is a musician whose performance is born from genuine, embodied sensibility. He argues that a performer cannot affect listeners unless they are sentimentally engaged with inner feeling. Bach's musician must inwardly experience the very passions they seek to elicit, for the disclosure of his/her own sensation sympathetically evokes a corresponding disposition in the audience. What Bach proposes here also mirrors Hill's directions to the actor, who is encouraged to recognize various passions in their text, assume each, and transition from one to the next, appropriating fitting expressions to each. In this view, the outward expression of Bach's musician, whether it be "lively", "joyous," "languishing," or "sad," is prompted by an inner excitation, to which it retains a close coupling. In Bach's view, the performer must submit in some measure to his/her sensibility, such that execution is a consequence of it. This view of performance is a network of reciprocal sensations: the performer's own imagination and inner feelings couple and give rise to the external features of delivery, stirring the audience's emotions, creating a shared sympathetic experience. Sensibility here is not a private, static quality but a dynamic faculty that enables the musician to receive, amplify, and communicate sentiments.

Bach is equally clear that this embodied sensibility must be governed by judgement and corporeal eloquence. He warns that one can "easily fall" into an excess of affect, where the performance becomes all-too languid ("*schläfrig*" and "*schleppend*") and the very means of expression collapses. This is also likely why Bach does not imagine delivery as disembodied sound alone: he explicitly allows that expression cannot occur without gesture while simultaneously warning against ugly, unseemly gestures that distract or deform the message. The performer's task is therefore to cultivate gestures that are beautiful and fitting: outward signs that assist the listener, because they are refined, proportionate,

⁵⁶ Indem der Musickus nicht anders rühren kan, er sey dann selbst gerührt; so muß er nothwendig sich selbst in alle Affecten setzen können, welche er bey seinen Zuhörern erregen will; er giebt ihnen seine Empfindungen zu verstehen und bewegt sie solchergestalt am besten zur Mit-Empfindung. Bey matten und traurigen Stellen wird er matt und traurig. Man sieht und hört es ihm an. Hierbei nehme man sich vor dem Fehler des Allzuschläfrigen und Schleppenden in acht. Man kan durch zu vielen Affect und Melancholie leicht darein fallen. Dieses geschieht ebenfals bey heftigen, lustigen, und andern Arten von Gedancken, wo er sich alsdenn in diese Affecten setzt. Kaum, daß er den einen stillt, so erregt er einen andern, folglich wechselt er beständig mit Leidenschaften ab. Diese Schuldigkeit beobachtet er überhaupt bey Stücken, welche ausdrückend gesetzt sind, sie mögen von ihm selbst oder von jemand anders herrühren; im letzten Fall muß er dieselbe Leidenschaften bey sich empfinden, welche der Urheber des fremden Stückes bey dessen Verfertigung hatte. Besonders aber kan der Clavieriste vorzüglich auf allerley Art sich der Gemüther seiner Zuhörer durch Fantasien aus dem Kopfe bemeistern. Daß alles dieses ohne die geringsten Gebehden abgehen könne, wird derjenige bloß leugnen, welcher durch seine Unempfindlichkeit genöthigt ist, wie ein geschnittes Bild vor dem Instrumente zu sitzen. So unanständig und schädlich heßliche Gebährden sind: so nützlich sind die guten, indem sie unsern Absichten bey den Zuhörern zu Hülfe kommen. Diese letztern Ausüßer machen ungeachtet ihrer Fertigkeit ihren sonst nicht übeln Stücken oft selbst schlechte Ehre. Sie wissen nicht, was darinnen steckt, weil sie es nicht herausbringen können. Spielt solche Stücke aber ein anderer, welcher zärtliche Empfindungen besitzt, und den guten Vortrag in seiner Gewalt hat; so erfahren sie mit Verwunderung, daß ihre Wercke mehr enthalten, als sie gewust und geglaubt haben. Man sieht daraus, daß ein guter Vortrag auch ein mittelmäßiges Stück erheben, und ihm Beyfall erwerben kan. Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 3rd edition (Leipzig: Im Schwickertschen Verlage, 1787), Part I, pp. 91–92 (§13).

tasteful, and rhetorically fitting to the affect at hand. In this way, Bach's ideal "feeling musician" is also an eloquent body—one whose movements, posture, and manner (no less than touch and timing) form a legible, aesthetically shaped language.

The sentimental intensity of Bach's own performances can be correlated in Burney's descriptions of his playing, who met him in 1772:

During this time, he grew so animated and *possessed*, that he not only played, but looked like one inspired. His eyes were fixed, his under lip fell, and drops of effervescence distilled from his countenance.⁵⁷

Burney's account of C.P.E. Bach paints the picture of a deep feeling musician; not someone detached and distant from the bodily agitations of sentiments but entranced in mind and body. For Burney, the results were highly convincing, as Burney claimed Bach to be "not only one of the greatest composers that ever existed for keyed instruments, but the best player, in point of *expression*" prioritizing "the expressive" over virtuosic but empty "rapid execution."⁵⁸

What is described here is consistent with the sentimental aesthetics of the period. In this model, the feeling musician while performing is afflicted by emotion. This sensibility also leaves him/her open to the feedback (Mazy Round) that will dynamically transform their delivery in real time. In his account of the chronometre in 1748 — an early precursor to the metronome — Diderot argues that musicians of "feeling" would struggle to be expressive if they had to slavishly restrict themselves to a uniform pulse:

They [musicians] will object, against any Chronometre in general, that there may not be four bars in an aria that are exactly the same length; two things necessarily contribute to lengthening some and hastening others: taste and feeling in harmony [...]. A musician who knows his art has not played four bars of an air before he grasps its character and gives himself over to it: only the pleasure of harmony suspends him; here he wants the chords to be struck, there he wants them to be concealed; that is to say, he sings or plays more or less slowly from one bar to another, and even from one quarter-time to the next.⁵⁹

Diderot claims that a skilled musician instantly senses the character of a piece and responds expressively to it intuitively, by submitting to their sensibility. Feeling naturally and instinctually leads the performer to deploy reflexive dynamics and stretch or compress time: tempo rubato that arguably

⁵⁷ Burney, *The Present State of Music in Germany, the Netherlands, and United Provinces*, vol. II, pp. 269–70.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁵⁹ Ils objecteront contre tout Chronomètre en général, qu'il n'y a peut-être pas dans un air quatre mesures qui soient exactement de la même durée; deux choses contribuant nécessairement à ralentir les unes & à précipiter les autres, le goût et l'harmonie [...]. Un Musicien qui sçait son art n'a pas joué quatre mesures d'un air qu'il en saisit le caractère & qu'il s'y abandonne: il n'y a que le plaisir de l'harmonie qui le suspende; il veut ici que les accords soient frappés, là qu'ils soient dérobés; c'est-à-dire, qu'il chante ou joue plus ou moins lentement d'une mesure à une autre, & même d'un tems & d'un quart de tems à celui qui le suit. Denis Diderot, *Mémoires sur différens sujets de mathématiques* (Paris: 1748), pp. 193–94.

responds to emotional inertia. Like Hill and Lessing had proposed for acting, Diderot underscores that this flexibility afforded to emotional inertia is what makes musicians musical.

In this model, the feeling musician cannot be merely prescriptive: he/she must be active and reactive, and his/her sensibility guides the imagination and enhances delivery. Holding with this aesthetic paradigm, such a musician could not be cold, indifferent, or detached from their emotions: the external features, the arrangements of notes and commonplaces would become artificial, mechanical, stiff, and lifeless, like Marianne Dashwood's "detested" jargon. In this view, these objective external features are lifeless on their own without genuine inner feeling to animate them. Each musical gesture could be delivered with intent, clothed in sentiment, and given clarity: all accessed through a receptivity to the sentiments. Sensibility is so central to this aesthetic conception of music that it arguably should not be marginalized, and a performer seeking to play rhetorically would have to develop it in some measure.

It follows that training the body in declamation and rhetorical acting with spoken text could become a foundational step in developing the feeling musician in practice. In poetry and theatre, words carry relatively precise semantic content, and gesture, facial expression, and prosody can be aligned with clearly intelligible sentiments. Working first in this domain allows the performer to see and feel how a change in inner feeling couples to voice, face, and gesture. Methodologically, beginning the practice-led component of this study with poetry therefore gives embodied delivery a kind of semantic scaffolding. Over time, these couplings could become stored as embodied memories: for example, the body "remembers" how grief sits in the chest and throat, how indignation sharpens the breath and gaze, how tenderness softens the hands and slows the pulse of speech. This process would directly cultivate Hill's "plastic Imagination." At the same time, it could refine sensibility, making the performer more responsive: small shifts in text, situation, or tone could become immediately felt and mirrored somatically. Then when the performer later shifts to music—where meaning is less tied to precise verbal concepts—these embodied memories and this plastic imagination could be reactivated and redirected.

4.4 Rhetorical Expressive Strategies compared to Modern Expressive Ideologies

Concerning the modern performance of historical works, sentimental acting theories and the ideal of the feeling musician, with their emphases on imagination, sensibility, and corporeal eloquence, propose a historically situated model of emotional expressivity. Modern acting strategies, with their preference for subdued, "realist" behaviour, propose another. Furthermore, modern pianism and concert culture often operate with some blend of modern strategies and a third, oriented toward technical brilliance and extrovert gesture. In what follows, the focus shifts from how inner feeling and outward sign can be coupled to how different expressive strategies organise that coupling—and where they may fall short of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century rhetorical and aesthetic ambitions. Focusing on the modern

performance and interpretation of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century works, this section examines how these approaches differ in their treatment of expression, and how contemporary ideals, in different ways, could weaken this coupling.

4.4.1 Characterizing (Post)Modern Acting

Even if the coupling between inner feeling and outer sign can be achieved, are not the signs employed in the eighteenth century—rhetorical schemata, codified gestures, and heightened tones—simply too exaggerated to count as “natural” and be convincing for modern audiences: especially those who are oriented to acting styles rooted in “realism” like method acting? Modern commentators frequently dismiss historical acting styles as histrionic, overly sentimental, or simply “over the top.” As one recent overview of acting styles puts it, “a twenty-first century American audience viewing a nineteenth century melodrama would find the broad gestures and declamatory speech laughable,” even though such a style once counted as effective and appropriate in the period.⁶⁰ How, it is asked, can the rhetorician’s grand gestures, stylized poses, and “hyperbolic” fire be deemed naturalistic and effectively moving for a modern audience? From a contemporary perspective, it can seem puzzling that such intensity could be anything but mannered and paradoxically coexist with the eighteenth century’s professed commitment to “nature.” For example, writing about the eighteenth century, scholar Paul Goring notes that “all elocutionists invoke nature, but *en bloc*, elocutionary tracts reveal that a body deemed properly eloquent was no stable or universally accepted construction.”⁶¹ What this suggests is that, although elocutionists anchored their prescriptions in the body’s “natural signs,” the practice of rhetorical acting was continually reshaped by fashion, taste, and convention.

From a modern, psychologically oriented viewpoint, the question arises whether these “excesses” are simply too “artificial” to offer the kind of realism or verisimilitude that is now often championed in twenty-first century acting. The heightened aesthetic of rhetorical expression can indeed first appear histrionic when set beside more subdued twenty-first-century acting techniques. However, this objection risks conflating everyday realism with expressive, or artistic “truth.” Lessing’s notion of corporeal eloquence assumes that the same natural signs of the passions can be refined and intensified without breaking their coupling to inner feeling. As Burgh puts it in *The Art of Public Speaking* (1761), “Art is but Nature improved upon and refined”: not replaced.⁶² This formulation, for sentimental theorists of delivery, applies not only to language and composition but also to the expressive body and its heightened, yet still “natural,” signs. Seen in this light, the issue is not whether expressive gestures are too “big” or “small,” but whether they are suitably coupled to sentiment and to the elevated situations that fine art often stages. Arguably, why should music, opera, and theatre—concerned with

⁶⁰ William Frankfather and Wayne Narey, “Acting Styles”, *EBSCO Research Starters* (Ipswich, MA: EBSCO, 2022), n.p.; Accessed 16 November 2025, [EBSCO Research Starters – Acting Styles](#).

⁶¹ Goring, *The Rhetoric of Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, p. 43.

⁶² Burgh, *The Art of Public Speaking*, p. 6.

kings, mythical heroes, shipwrecks, betrayals, and ecstatic devotion—be bound to the commonplaces of the everyday, or to a narrowly defined “banal” realism?

Hence, rhetorical techniques may have some advantages over modern approaches when approaching historical repertoire in avoiding the affected indifference epitomized by Edward Ferrars’s flat declamation of Cowper in Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). Taking the view of various eighteenth-century rhetorical theorists and elocutionists, rhetorically composed texts were designed to be delivered rhetorically. Sentimental narratives use descriptive writing and *hypotyposis* to stage each sentiment in a clear sequence, slowing and articulating the flow of emotions through a character’s consciousness so that the audience can savor each impression in a heightened, “improved” naturalism. Modern “psychological” acting methods, with their preference for low-key verisimilitude, can easily undercut this design. If performers aim above all at understated realism, they may underplay precisely those passages that were crafted to invite heightened, Sublime *pathos*, and the result is a performance that feels enigmatic or emotionally thin, even though the text itself is saturated with feeling.

In another category of modern expressive ideology are the Brechtian or (post)modern strategies. Unlike Method acting, they aim to intentionally disrupt emotional engagement to provoke “critical reflection.”⁶³ Whatever their merits in contemporary theatre, such ironic distancing offers little for the performer interested in the rhetorical strategies presented in this study, whose task is to create an earnest, self-sustaining coupling between inner sentiment and outward sign. When these distancing techniques are applied wholesale to historical works, they risk producing a new kind of affectation: not florid overacting, but a cultivated posture of coolness and embarrassment toward emotion itself. The work may become cold, calculating, understated, and opaque—more concerned with signaling its own critical sophistication than with addressing the feelings it was originally meant to move. In such cases, the sentimental feedback loop between stage and audience would be dampened rather than intensified. By contrast, as Wentz emphasizes, historical theatre sought to equip actors with a virtuosic corporeal eloquence, enabling them to express themselves intensely enough to excite admiration and enthusiasm.⁶⁴ A high degree of fiery *pathos* was expected to kindle corresponding feeling in spectators; emotional resonance rarely catches from deliberate understatement or ironic detachment. From this perspective, post-modern distancing stands at a considerable remove from the expressive aims of many eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century works, to the point that modern performances shaped by such principles may hardly resemble the aesthetic experience those works once offered. In such cases, audiences may reasonably ask whether the works themselves are truly being revived or merely repurposed as vehicles for a different artistic agenda—one that, in diluting or even neutralising their

⁶³ See Eder, *Characters in Film and Other Media*, pp. 30–32.

⁶⁴ Wentz, “Introduction: ‘I was just saying the lines.’”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 46.

original Sublime force, effectively ruins what eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century artists regarded as their central task: the powerful stirring of the passions.

None of this is to deny that (post)modern *Regietheater* and concept-driven performance have their place. It would be naive to insist that twenty-first-century reception should exclude critical reflection, estrangement, or even deliberately absurd juxtapositions to confront problematic material in historical works. Such projects have the potential to yield powerful insights into contemporary concerns. But when this reflective or ironic stance becomes the primary affect and is treated as the non-negotiable frame for all historical works, performers and audiences risk losing contact with the rich imagination and *pathos* that once lay at the centre of these pieces, and the imaginative enthusiasm these works once enjoyed grows cold. If the goal is explicitly to produce a post-modern meta-commentary, then the resulting alienation effects and playful “nonsense” may be perfectly coherent on their own terms. However, if an artist claims to be working as an historical interpreter—someone ostensibly faithful to the conception of a work—then it is difficult to justify marginalizing precisely those elements that Cicero, and later eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers and musicians took to be essential. The difficulty arises when such treatments are presented as historically faithful. Moreover, by binding a work too tightly to a specific contemporary agenda or topical reading, directors risk eroding the very universality and cross-temporal resonance that have allowed a work to speak across centuries. The work’s relevance becomes narrowed to the specific concept of the director, and not much more. A performance style that prides itself on standing outside the work’s circuit of feeling may be artistically valid in its own right, but it can hardly claim continuity with the expressive horizon or *telos* of these pieces. From a sentimental perspective, the task of historically minded performers is not to ironically erase away this pathos, but to re-activate it—to cultivate bodies and imaginations capable of re-entering that circuit of feeling, rather than hovering above it with a cynical smile.

4.4.2 Characterizing (Post)Modern Expressive Strategies in Musical Performance

A similar tension appears in musical performance, though it is difficult to reduce either twenty-first century early music or mainstream classical culture to a single, monolithic practice. Nevertheless, a substantial body of writing has identified recurring tendencies that, in different ways, shift true pathos and embodied delivery out of the centre of attention. What is at stake, again, is the relation between inner feeling and outward expression: to what extent do current performance norms encourage coupling between inward sentiment and outward sign, and to what extent do they substitute other priorities for that coupling?

In the historically informed performance (HIP) world, critics have pointed to a strong drift towards text-literalism, impersonality, and a wariness of the “profound” or Sublime. Richard Taruskin famously characterises this modernist performance ideal hiding in historical clothing as “text-centered, hence literalistic,” “impersonal, hence unfriendly to spontaneity,” and “lightweight, hence leery of the

profound or the sublime,” adding that “Early Music has brought them all to a peak.”⁶⁵ Neal Peres da Costa, from another angle, laments the gap between the flexible, rubato-rich playing documented in early recordings (late nineteenth-century / early twentieth century) and “contemporary, text-bound pianism” that deliberately takes “the notation at face value,” knowing that this choice entails giving up a large spectrum of historically attested expressive freedoms.⁶⁶ Bruce Haynes also critiques this same phenomenon he dubs “text-fetishism”—the rigid adherence to musical scores without allowing performers the flexibility to interpret details. Haynes argues that such strict fidelity to the written text can stifle creativity and expression in performance.⁶⁷

In this climate, HIP practitioners can feel pressure to become “transparent” executors of score and treatise: individual sensibility is bracketed in favour of a putatively objective, “faithful” style. This tendency arises from the modernist concept of *Werktreue*, or score-fidelity that dominates contemporary performance discourse. Igor Stravinsky promoted an “objectivist” performer as a mechanical executant who “submitted” to the score, not allowing him/herself to engage emotionally with the work—a notion wholly incompatible with the aforementioned sentimental historical models.⁶⁸ Like an automaton or a computer executing code, the ideal performer in this framework thrives on an “overabundance” of signs, reducing interpretation to precise reproduction, and does not add any execution that is not explicitly indicated. This vision relies on the assumption that meaning lies solely in the notated text and that fidelity to the score precludes imaginative or affective engagement. Haynes also highlights this paradox of the “transparent performer,” the idea that a performer can—and should—function as an invisible conduit for the composer’s intentions, faithfully transmitting the score without adding personal interpretation. The result is a very “clean” literalist approach—what Wentz called “the lucid, objective, contemporaneous musical solutions of late twentieth-century historically informed performance (HIP).”⁶⁹

From the perspective of coupling, this amounts to a systematic subtraction of inner feeling from the equation, reproaching any sort of performance practices that are not explicitly notated, like intuitive rubato, chord spreading, portamento, and dislocation. The elements of outward expression: articulation, tempo, and dynamics are tightly regulated by externally imposed norms; there is relatively little space for the performer’s own imaginative agitation or impression to shape those parameters in real time. The loop from inner movement to outward sign is deliberately severed in the name of fidelity.

⁶⁵ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 166–67.

⁶⁶ Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Foreword by Clive Brown, pp. xii–xiii; Introduction, pp. xxi–xxiii.

⁶⁷ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, pp. 90–93.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58; pp. 93–96.

⁶⁹ Jed Wentz, “Renewing historical performance through an embodiment of historical acting techniques” in Mimi Mitchell (ed.), *Early Music in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), p. 34.

In much contemporary mainstream classical piano culture, commentators diagnose different, though related, challenges to coupling. On one side lies an extrovert virtuoso stream. Haynes's chapter title "Mainstream Style: 'Chops, but no Soul'" sums up a performance ideology in which competitive brilliance, homogeneous tone, and near studio-perfect control function as primary currencies of value.⁷⁰ Jane Ginsborg's survey of 102 musicians shows that respondents most often equate virtuosity with "technique, ease, mastery and showmanship," while a significant subgroup complain that such perfection can amount to "pointless finish" when not grounded in expressive or communicative intent.⁷¹ Taking these views into account, modern piano culture, in this guise, is often built around "affected" visible effort and relentless brilliance: big arm gestures, extreme dynamics, and high-gloss sonority project intensity, but the deeper shaping of affect, rhetoric, and long-range tension can remain comparatively generic. Here the coupling is skewed towards the external: abundant outer signal, but relatively thin inner feeling. It becomes a new mannerism: a jargon of "excellence," in which overwrought external signs of passion are mistaken for passion itself. Arguably, this tendency is quite distant from the sentimental aesthetics examined earlier in this study. In the aesthetics of sensibility, playing "with passion" (*pathos*) depends on a distinctive nuance—at once eloquently legible and emotionally convincing—that arises from coupling and corporeal eloquence, where natural signs are not merely depicted but refined by art. Modern "passion," by contrast, often registers as brilliant and emphatic at the surface, yet comparatively blunt in its affective gradations. As a theorist of the period might argue, this brilliance superficially dazzles but does not reliably achieve the finely calibrated eloquence that sentimental *pathos* presupposes. This notion of what playing with passion in the sentimental sense will be explored further in the discussion on taste in Chapter 5.4.4.

Alongside this extrovert stream in pianists, there is also a more reverential, text-literalist tendency that mirrors the cool objectivism of some HIP and the low-key "realism" of modern acting. Kenneth Hamilton opens *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* with an anecdote about a Beethoven recital. Prefaced by stern warnings against audience noise; the pianist played with "all the spontaneity of a tenth take in the recording studio," a "reverential disinterring" of supposedly improvisatory works that became, in Hamilton's words, "a miserable experience."⁷² Lisa McCormick's study of international classical music competitions highlights a related issue: the pressure to conform to "standardized" modes of performance. McCormick argues that once musical performance is reframed as an event of elimination and ranking, jurors are pushed to translate what would nominally be aesthetic impressions into numerical scores, and this setup "interferes" with ordinary music performance, reception, and the artist's expressive agency. In her view, musicians adapt their playing

⁷⁰ Haynes, *The End of Early Music*, pp. 48–63.

⁷¹ Jane Ginsborg, "'The Brilliance of Perfection' or 'Pointless Finish'? What Virtuosity Means to Musicians", *Musicae Scientiae* 22/4 (2018), pp. 460–66.

⁷² Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), Preface, p. vii–viii.

to the contingencies of being judged rather than to their own artistic aims.⁷³ In Chapter 4 she underscores how this would often produce strategic, risk-averse self-presentation: competitors describe calculating repertoire to satisfy presumed jury expectations (e.g., programming early displays of virtuosity to demonstrate “chops”). More broadly, she links the competition habitus to norms in which asserting personality—“taking liberties with the musical markings”⁷⁴—is framed as illegitimate, helping explain how competitions can funnel performers toward standardized interpretations at the expense of interpretive agency and authenticity.⁷⁵ In these paradigms which gravitate towards a text-literalist or “standardized” stream, the coupling between inner feeling and outward expression fails in the opposite way to the virtuoso mannerism: the inner feeling is kept on a tight leash in the name of objectivity and piety to “dogma,” and outward signs could be smoothed and neutralised so thoroughly that little living *pathos* remains to animate them.

These observations point to two broad trends that arguably interfere with the sentimental aesthetic ideal of coupling. First, there is a “standardized” text-literalism that subtracts individual expressive agency and inner feeling from performance by obliging musicians to conform to a narrow model of “faithful” realisation. In this model, the performer’s role is primarily to replicate a standard solution; inner excitement that arises from sensibility to the music itself is treated as a potential source of distortion rather than as the motor of delivery. Secondly, there is a culture of virtuosic brilliance and perfection in which technical mastery, showmanship, and replicable polish become surrogate markers of expression. Here, virtuosic externals are effectively confused with affect; the surface is highly animated, but this animation is not reliably coupled to a worked-through, inward sentimental conception: it arises as rehearsed, replicable mechanical sparkle. Both tendencies, in different ways, substitute other values—fidelity, control, spectacle—for the disciplined but vivid relation between inner agitation and outward sign that eighteenth-century rhetorical and sentimental aesthetics took as central. Arguably, what is marginalised in both cases is precisely the embodied delivery and corporeal eloquence that binds meaning, affect, and sound together.

4.5 Justifications for Revisiting Classical Rhetorical Strategies

The most important feature of historical rhetorical strategies, arguably, is that they place the body, inner feeling, and above all communication via *pathos* at the centre of performance ideology. *Pathos* in this view is not an optional embellishment, or a secondary consideration, but the primary consideration: gesture, tone, timing, and movement are all judged according to how effectively they convey feeling to others. Crucially, these strategies are not satisfied merely with having strong feelings; they aim towards intersubjective communication of it. In this framework, the performer’s task becomes twofold: first, to

⁷³ See Lisa McCormick, *Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 6.

⁷⁴ McCormick, *Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music*, p. 132.

⁷⁵ For further reading, see McCormick, “Chapter 4: The presentation of musical self”, *Performing Civility: International Competitions in Classical Music*, pp. 122–65.

allow sensibility to genuinely colour the body and likewise outward expression (coupling), and second, to ensure that the resulting signs are clear, appropriate, and aesthetically heightened enough to be understood by others (legibility). In this way, rhetorical training could expand the tools the orator or musician has for turning inner subjectivity into intersubjective experience.

Another potential advantage of a rhetorical model deals with “universality.” Since every listener and spectator possesses a body and experiences emotions, this approach could imbue the performing arts with a renewed sense of accessibility. In this way, music is not treated chiefly as the appreciation of abstract forms, nor as a rarefied sign language of “rational affectivity” that only the initiated can decode. These models tend, in different ways, to marginalize artistic communication to the privileged few: one privileges structural–intellectual training, the other insider knowledge of codes. By contrast, a rhetorical–sentimental vision treats aesthetic experience as something fundamentally accessible—rooted in shared bodily responses and sympathetic imagination. New relevant questions could emerge: not “is this structurally clever?” or “is this historically correct?” but “was the audience moved emotionally?” In this way, it offers a means of making classical music and other historically-focused performing arts less remote and elitist, and more obviously relevant to common human experience.

This is the line Wentz develops in arguing that the effectiveness of old rhetorical techniques lies not in “misplaced nostalgia,” but in their decision to set “the body front and centre in psychology.”⁷⁶ As Wentz proposes, rhetorical acting “united with its soulful and musical declamation in which rhythm, pitch and tempo contribute to the expression of specific affects,” can evoke strong emotions in audiences, regardless of educational level, because it reaches them *through the body*. Wentz underscores that this approach, when performed, can connect young people to the old genres.⁷⁷ Because human bodies physiologically have not changed since the eighteenth century, embodied techniques can affect modern audiences in the same way they affected past ones.⁷⁸ Thus, investigating and integrating the rhetorical discipline into performance practice may be able to revitalize interest in historical repertoire for listeners who may have been alienated by objectivist or hyper-virtuosic norms, and to make it viable once more as a medium for expressing the human condition through sympathy.

⁷⁶ Wentz, “Introduction: ‘I was just saying the lines.’”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 17.

⁷⁷ Xavier Vandamme, Jed Wentz, “Seven Propositions Towards the Establishment of a New Kind of Theatre Festival”, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 394.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

5. Creativity, Genius, Imagination, and Taste

In the sources examined thus far, expressive performance in the aesthetics of sensibility could be understood as a continual maintenance of a coupling between inward feeling and outward sign. In this framework, expression was not merely a matter of style, but the audible and visible manifestation of embodied emotional experience, enlivened and organized by the imagination. Yet sensibility alone did not suffice. As was explored in Chapter 4.1.2, a balance of sense and sensibility was preferable. In corporeal eloquence, as Lessing and others conceived it, raw feeling had to be moderated by taste, so that the signs through which it emerged—tone, gesture, pacing—remained natural, noble, and intelligible. To understand how such a balance could be sustained, it becomes necessary to examine more closely the historically-situated aesthetic psychology of creativity: how “genius” was thought to coordinate sensibility, imagination, judgment, and taste in the artistic mind.

Framing questions of genius in such systematic terms is especially useful in a rhetorical context, because it allows expressive creativity to be understood not as mystical inspiration, but as the disciplined interaction of identifiable capacities. The model proposed by Alexander Gerard in his *Essay on Genius* (1774) breaks down creativity into a process. His theory links rhetoric, aesthetics, and psychology, and provides a historical model for understanding the performer or composer as a creative agent whose power lies in the cultivated and coordinated use of the mind’s faculties. In this chapter, Gerard’s account will be read in dialogue with more specifically musical notions of genius—such as those of Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart, Johann Georg Sulzer, and Johann Nikolaus Forkel—who emphasise sensibility as the root of musical expression. At the same time, the closely related concept of taste will be considered: the faculty that moderates sensibility, selects and shapes material, and ensures that outward signs remain natural, suitable, and communicable. Finally, these period conceptions of how creativity works will encourage a productive rereading of the era’s musical and elocutionary pedagogies, showing how methods that can look merely “rote” were designed to cultivate individual invention within a discipline of corporeal eloquence. In addition to offering musicological insights, this reframing is especially valuable for historically informed performers who rely on interpreting such primary sources in musical pedagogy as a part of their methodology. As will be argued in what follows, those materials were meant to generate—not suppress—expressive agency, bringing performance practice closer to the sentimental aesthetics and creative ideals of the period.

Within a rhetorical performance framework, this kind of systematization is not aimed at reducing artistry to formula, but at clarifying the conditions under which coupling, sensibility, judgment, taste, and technique can work together. Apart from scholarly historical insights, it also offers performers conceptual tools for understanding how a “sentimental” imagination internalizes affects,

how taste shapes their outward realization, and how genius consists in sustaining this interplay so that inner subjectivity becomes communicable, shared, and—at its strongest—Sublime.

5.1 Schubart's Notions of Musical Genius

In the writings of the musician and theorist Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart—later collected as *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* (published 1806, written during the 1770s–80s), music is treated as an art form that should appeal directly to the heart. For Schubart, musical genius lay in properties of sensibility, and the direct connections of the senses—especially the ear—to the heart.¹ Namely, Schubart's characteristics of musical genius include an enthusiastic receptivity to musical beauty, a tender heart that sympathizes with musical nobleness and beauty, a refined ear for pleasing sounds “that savours each pleasing sound [*Wohllaut*] and reluctantly hears each discord,” a natural feeling for rhythm and measure, and an irresistible love for music. Schubart underscores that genius is a matter of sensibility: the ability to perceive and respond emotionally to the subtleties of harmony and rhythm, to feel beauty and tension at the level of sensation, and to communicate that experience as something immediate. This notion of genius is both empirical and aesthetic, founded in embodied knowledge and sensory experience; for example, in the perception of consonance and dissonance, not merely as acoustical physics phenomena, but as sensations experienced in pleasure and pain. Musical genius, for Schubart, is to use this refined sensibility to receive and construct musical statements.

Schubart prioritizes the instinctive immediacy of feeling in his concept of musical genius, but his theory does not rule out cultivation and systematization by frameworks. On the contrary, Schubart notes that “without culture and practice” this genius “will always remain very imperfect.” Reflecting the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of his time, he notes that “Art must complete and fill out what nature threw down raw.”² Hence, Schubart's reflection on genius is accompanied in the source by a detailed taxonomy of musical-rhetorical commonplaces, which reveal an Enlightenment inclination towards understanding the phenomena of creativity in systematic terms. But Schubart is also quick to mention that the natural instincts of genius should not be overly tempered by artifice. In his criticism of the composer Georg Joseph Vogler, who Schubart describes as an “epoch maker” possessing “genius” but constrained by self-imposed “pedantry,” Schubart remarks that Vogler's “learnedness” stifles his genius. Accordingly,

it is one thing to have order and a correct sequence of thought, imprisoned by self-made rules, so that no flash of the lightning of a new truth can penetrate. The continual reflection on deathly cold rules causes lava streams of genius to falter, and instead of fire, slush rushes

¹ For his full account of musical genius, see Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, pp. 368–71; trans. Ted Alan Du Bois, pp. 424–27.

² Die Kunst muss vollenden und ausfüllen, was die Natur roh niederwarf. Ibid., p. 370; trans. Ted Alan DuBois, p. 426.

forth. This is undoubtedly the case for Vogler; his pieces have much stiffness, stubbornness, and coldness.³

Schubart is likely referring to Vogler's highly systematised, often overwrought approach to harmony: encyclopedic rule-systems and a delight in technical mastery that can seem to revel in its own ingenuity. What Schubart criticizes here is the possibility that excessive craft could suppress natural creative instincts, and lead to an arbitrary affectation. For Schubart, this represents a kind of musical intellect that risks losing sight of the immediate connection between sound and heart: one that is better served by a "noble simplicity." What he criticizes is not craft as such, but the point at which excessive craft begins to suppress natural creative instinct and harden into arbitrary affectation—where harmonic "inventions" look clever on paper but no longer arise from, or return to, genuine sensibility: a severing of coupling. Once again, the familiar eighteenth-century dichotomy between art and nature reappears: music is at its strongest when art improves nature without obscuring its source (being a connection to the inner feelings of the heart), so that theoretical sophistication remains a servant of pathos rather than its substitute.

5.2 Gerard's Faculties of Genius: An Overview

The idea that genius involves the orchestration of multiple faculties was articulated, among many others, by Alexander Gerard, a prominent figure of the Scottish Enlightenment. His *Essay on Genius* (1774) presents genius as a structured set of mental operations which, when cultivated in union, give rise to effective invention. Gerard positions genius as a driving force behind cultural and intellectual progress—a catalyst for new artistic, literary, and scientific forms. Crucially, he does not treat it as an ineffable spark bestowed upon a chosen few, but as the coordinated action of trainable faculties: sense, imagination, memory, judgment, and taste functioning together in a rational, organized manner.

Gerard's first faculty of genius, *sense*, refers to the power of perception, both external and internal. It is the faculty through which the mind becomes aware of the world and gathers the raw materials of thought. For Gerard, acute sensory awareness is essential to genius, as it provides the detailed multiplicity of impressions that fuel creative insight. The more refined the senses, the richer the content available for the imagination to transform. While sense provides the initial contact with external reality, sensibility gives these perceptions an emotional dimension, and likewise, expressive potential. To evoke nature, the artist must first perceive it with sensitivity—registering not only physical details, but also the causal and emotional logic that underlies behaviour, speech, and expression. This might mean noticing the way sorrow shapes a person's posture, how excitement quickens the rhythm

³ *Genie* fleucht Adlerflug, trinkt Sonnenstrahlen, jedes System in allen Wissenschaften und Künsten zwingt den Geist, und hemmt den Fortschritt der menschlichen Kenntnisse. Ein anderes ist Ordnung und richtige Gedankenreihe, ein anderes, diese Ordnung und Gedankenreihe so zu stellen, und durch selbst gemachte Regeln zu verpallisadiren, dass kein Blitzstrahl einer neuen Wahrheit mehr durchdringen kann. Das beständige Zurückdenken an todtkalte Regeln macht den Lavastrom des Genies stocken, und statt Feuer strömt Schneewasser. In diesem Fall ist unstreitig Vogler; daher haben seine Stücke viel Steifes, Eigensinniges, und Kaltes. Ibid., p. 134; trans. Ted Alan DuBois, pp. 184–85.

of speech, or how a series of musical modulations produces transitions from certain affects to others. Hence, sentimental perception allows the artist to absorb complex affective cues from the world around them and to internalize them in ways that imagination and judgment can later transform into expressive form. In both Schubart's and Gerard's account, this finely tuned sensibility is what distinguishes the genius: the ability to feel with precision, and to observe nature not coldly, but sympathetically and aesthetically.

Memory serves as the repository of past experiences and impressions, enabling both recollection and recombination. For Gerard, memory "preserves scrupulously the very position and arrangement of the original sensations,"⁴ and likewise supports imagination by preserving the content it draws upon, while also allowing for reflection, comparison, and the building of larger conceptual structures over time. A detailed memory is important to the artist, as "the memory of separate objects must be very strong and lively" because "the artist must conceive them strikingly, that he may be able to represent them strikingly."⁵

Imagination is the central faculty of genius in Gerard's model. It is its engine, leading "us from a perception that is present, to the view of many more, and carry us through extensive, distant, and untrodden fields of thought."⁶ In other words, imagination draws the mind through a series of impression, allowing it to combine, manipulate, reshape, and reconfigure the materials received through sense and stored in memory; namely, it "can transpose, vary, and compound our perceptions into an endless variety of forms, so as to produce numberless combinations that are wholly new."⁷ In Gerard's account, imagination works by associating disparate ideas together: imagination "bestows union on ideas whose archetypes had no relation,"⁸ with a certain fervour that Gerard calls "enthusiasm." These methods of association work by detecting "certain qualities" that belong "to all the ideas that are associated by the imagination."⁹ This associative and generative power distinguishes the genius from the merely learned or competent, whose ideas are often derivative or conventional. Similar accounts of imaginative association were posited by theorists like Engel to describe the mechanism of musical painting.¹⁰ In addition to catalyzing rhetorical invention, Gerard notes that these associative powers help the mind order and sequence ideas.¹¹

However, Gerard does not suggest that genius operates independently of reason. Instead, he views genius as a negotiation between imagination and *judgment*, each complementing the other. For

⁴ Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Genius* (London: Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell; [etc., etc.], 1774), p. 28.

⁵ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 365.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ See page 89.

¹¹ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 62.

Gerard, judgement comprehends “reason from the comparison of ideas and sensations.”¹² In Gerard’s account, judgement is connected to reason and importantly, rhetorical *telos*. It ensures that ideas remain coherent and applicable to their intended effect. Hence, it is the faculty that assesses, selects, and regulates the operations of imagination. Without judgment, genius risks becoming eccentricity or extravagance, for a fruitful imagination without judgement will produce “a multitude of ideas” that are “a confused chaos, in which incoherent conceptions are often mixt, conceptions so unsuitable and disproportioned, that they can no more be combined into one regular work, than a number of wheels taken from different watches, can be turned into one machine.”¹³ While judgement, associated with “cold” reason, is particularly important for scientific genius, Gerard notes that artistic genius is moderated by another species of judgement: taste, an evaluation formed by “warm” sensibility. Reason still had its place in music: for example, in correct application of the rules of harmony and counterpoint, but taste adds an aesthetic and moral sensitivity to the evaluative process specifically fitting for the artistic genius. Whereas judgment may assess logical consistency or utility, taste responds to beauty, elegance, harmony of proportions, and sentiment. For Gerard, taste refines and guides genius by helping the mind recognize not only what is correct, but what is fitting and moving.

Together, these faculties constitute a model of genius: sense supplies the material, memory stores it, imagination manipulates, transforms, and synthesizes it, and judgment/taste regulates it. Genius, in Gerard’s view, is not the domination of one faculty over the others, but their cooperation—an interplay that produces both intellectual and artistic invention. Gerard’s view of structured creativity is endemic of late eighteenth-century thought, shaped by education, experience, and aesthetic judgment. Crucially, sensibility operates at every stage of the creative process: it enables the artist to perceive sentimentally laden material for invention, informs what is retained in memory, and strongly influences the sympathetic imagination and aesthetic evaluation through taste. Here, sensibility is the emotional engine of creativity—shaping what the artist notices, remembers, imagines, and ultimately expresses—ensuring that every part of the process is coupled to an inner feeling.

Similar models of structured creativity are assumed by many musical theorists. For the musical composer, Forkel notes: “to combine this judgement, this educated and refined taste with fiery imagination, to bring order and plan to the progression of sensation, is the pinnacle of the art of a true sonata composer and ode poet, but at the same time, it is a difficulty that has always caused, and will continue to cause, us to have so few true and genuine ode poets and sonata composers.”¹⁴ Such a model

¹² Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 32.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁴ Diese seine Beurtheilung, diesen gebildeten und abgezogenen Geschmack mit der feurigen Einbildungskraft zu verbinden, Ordnung und Plan in den Fortgang der Empfindung zu bringen, ist der Gipfel der Kunst eines ächten Sonatencomponisten und Odendichters, aber auch zugleich, eine Schwierigkeit, welche von jeher vernrsacht hat, und noch ferner verursachen wird, daß wir so wenig wahre und ächte Odendichter und Sonatencomponisten haben. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1783), p. 28.

is equally evident in the practice of musical *partimento*, a pedagogical tradition developed in the Neapolitan conservatories throughout the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth. *Partimenti* were bass lines or skeletal frameworks that trained composers and performers in the art of improvisation, composition, and expression. *Partimenti* functioned as rhetorical commonplaces: as creative scaffolds, guiding students to internalize into their memory harmonic patterns, rhetorical gestures, and stylistic conventions which they could then manipulate imaginatively with discernment.¹⁵ In *Music in the Galant Style* (2008), musicologist Robert Gjerdingen provides an in-depth exploration of galant *partimento*, focusing on the use of *galant schemata*: recurring voice-leading patterns. These served as foundational elements in the composition and improvisation practices of the time. Through his analysis, Gjerdingen demonstrates how these *partimenti* encapsulate the grammatical behaviour of the galant style, offering insights into the compositional techniques employed by eighteenth-century composers.¹⁶ In Gerard's terms, this pedagogy cultivated memory (through repeated exposure to patterns), imagination (by encouraging inventive realization of those patterns and their aesthetic sequencing), judgement (in the logical application of grammatical rules), and taste (in shaping expressively appropriate outcomes). The *partimento* tradition thus embodies Gerard's view that creativity arises from a well-stocked and well-regulated mind, capable of transforming learned vocabulary into original expressive inventions.

Gjerdingen's account is deliberately structural and does not foreground sensibility; yet it is not difficult to add sensibility to the equation implied by his work. As is reported by various musical theorists operating in the aesthetics of sensibility, the choice and assemblage of schemata, their placement, repetition, and transformation, are commanded by a composer's sense of *telos*. This affective purpose governs how these materials are deployed. In a sentimental framework, the true *galant* master would not merely string together patterns correctly or arbitrarily but would use a refined sensibility to shape them towards a specific affective goal so that the resulting composition fulfils a coherent affective trajectory. In this way, *partimento* practice can be seen as a training not only in stylistic grammar, but in directing that grammar towards the act of moving of the passions. Such an artist's task was not to defy structure, but to infuse it with sentimental meaning.

5.3 Imagination and Commonplaces

In Gerard's model, imagination is a central feature of genius. The imagination, as understood by eighteenth-century sentimentalists like Aaron Hill or Adam Smith, was the vital link between internal sentiment and outward expression. The generative component of imagination is what Gerard and other authors call "fancy." For Gerard, fancy requires "a peculiar vigour of association."¹⁷ It is the

¹⁵ See Robert O. Gjerdingen, "Introduction", *Music in the Galant Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 3–25.

¹⁶ For a list of schemata, see Gjerdingen, "Appendix A: Schema Prototypes" in *Music in the Galant Style*, pp. 453–464. The body of the book provides detailed explanations, examples and applications of these prototypes.

¹⁷ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 41.

imagination's power to rapidly associate disparate ideas, often through resemblance, contrast, or contiguity, without being bound by logical order or necessity. Fancy is quick and enthusiastic,¹⁸ allowing the mind to leap from one image or idea to another in surprising and striking ways. For Gerard, it is particularly crucial in poetry, rhetoric, and by extension music, where expressive force depends on novelty, liveliness, and evocative imagery. Furthermore, Gerard notes that fancy operates multimodally across artistic and epistemological domains, noting that Homer's imaginative genius "gained him access to all the magazines of ideas, and enabled him to draw materials from every part of nature, and from the whole circle of human arts."¹⁹ This would lend support to the multimodal nature of a rhetorical approach: feeding the imagination with insights in musical expression from declamation and acting.

Hill's language of a "plastic Imagination" and "flexible *Fancy*" fits precisely into this model.²⁰ For Hill, the actor must be able to form a passion vividly and then change it at will: the imagination must be pliable enough to mould itself to a certain passionate state, and then relinquish one state to assume another as the role demands. Flexible fancy is thus the engine that keeps the coupling between inner feeling and outward sign responsive; it continually supplies new images and situations for sensibility to inhabit, ensuring that the body is never merely repeating the same material but is freshly manipulating it in novel ways.

However, Gerard argues that imagination needs to be carefully regulated, guided with discipline. Losing focus can quickly send the artist along the wrong path. Moreover, imagination requires regularity and focus. Gerard notes that judgement is needed to keep imagination on its track, as this "regularity consists in a capacity of keeping the end of a work steadily in view," and it is "judgement which perceives when imagination deviates from the paths which lead to the end proposed."²¹ Consequently, Gerard explicitly connects imagination to the classical rhetorical commonplaces. He notes that "all the assistances in invention, which orators have contrived, by means of topics and common places," are founded on the principle that "judgement, by surveying the work directs imagination to many quarters where it may find conceptions adapted to its purpose."²² Moreover, Gerard writes that "Quintilian justly observes" that the commonplaces "are no farther useful than as they enable imagination to take the hint from the decision of judgement, and by its own force run directly forward to those topics which suit the present case."²³

Gerard views the commonplaces as tools the imagination can work with—starting points for invention, and guiding frameworks governed by judgement and taste. This differs from the conception

¹⁸ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 57.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²⁰ See Chapter 4.2.1.

²¹ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 313.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 94.

²³ *Ibid.*

of the commonplaces assumed by commentators in musicological “rationalized affect” readings, where the commonplaces are viewed as recognizable signs of a semiotic code.²⁴ In contrast, Gerard’s interpretation does not view commonplaces as ends in themselves, but as offering structured prompts for thought and persuasion that help to maintain the coupling between inner intention and outward oriented form. By steering the fancy towards a goal, Gerard’s commonplaces are always oriented toward a clear *telos*. Animated by sentimental imagination, they predispose it to certain design channels to help it further discover associated inventions that will be understood as part of a shared cultural vocabulary, while preventing it from deviating too wildly. In this sense, imagination enlivens and personalizes the commonplaces, turning them from abstract or conventional schemata into powerful, context-sensitive expressions, that conform to an overall rhetorical design and that maintain a credible link between inner feeling and communicable outward sign. A “cultivated” taste has been shaped by these channels so that when sensibility stirs, it tends to express itself reflexively through signs that are both natural, fitting, and rhetorically legible. While such structures may sound like restrictions to the imagination, as Gerard notes, they are necessary to ensure that creativity is regulated by *telos* and that the flow of inner movement into outer expression does not dissolve into enigma. For example, in music, a simple melody could be elaborated through variations structured around specific *topoi*. The effectiveness of this genre relies on the composer inventively transforming the theme, associating it with original ideas in surprising and contrasting manners that balance recognisable unity and inventive diversity. Thus, Gerard implicitly positions the rhetorical commonplaces as the connection between inherited external forms (including style) and original expression—between the shared cultural vocabulary of commonplaces and the unique expressive voice of the rhetorician, and therefore as a crucial mediator of coupling between subjective feeling and intersubjective form.

Guiding invention with imagination and rhetorical commonplaces was similarly addressed by Sulzer in his *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (1774). Sulzer advises his prospective artist to study rhetoric, stating “the ancient rhetoricians seemed to have sought out with unbelievable diligence every possible means by which one could discover some useful idea.”²⁵ For the composer of music, he promotes the use of rhetorical commonplaces and topics, and lauds praise on to Mattheson for providing a foundation for taxonomizing these methods to musical composition in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739). Sulzer’s second source for inspiration in invention is the multiplicity of fancy, used to discover appropriate inventions by chance. Namely, the artist “will often stumble upon inventions if he is constantly occupied with matters of his art.”²⁶ Sulzer and Mattheson show that the tools of rhetoric are used to enhance the often fickle and capricious nature of serendipitous imagination. From the standpoint of inner-outer coupling and notions of corporeal eloquence, this is crucial. Inner

²⁴ See Introduction, p. 15.

²⁵ Sulzer, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, p. 60.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

movements of sensibility are therefore not left to spill out in idiosyncratic or private forms; they are channelled into gestures that belong to a common store, making the link between subjective feeling and intersubjective sign more reliable. In Sulzer's model, as in Gerard's, rhetoric does not replace inspiration but mediates it, tightening the bond between what the artist feels, what the imagination throws up, and what the audience can actually understand and be moved by.

5.4 Judgement and Taste

Just as Cicero had commented that "every systematic treatment of argumentation has two branches, one concerned with invention of arguments and the other with judgement of their validity,"²⁷ Gerard's theory of genius introduces the faculties of judgment and its related component, taste, which play a crucial role in shaping raw imaginative energy into meaningful, expressive, and communicable artworks. According to Gerard, "whenever an image or a sentiment occurs to the poet or the orator, imagination sets it in every possible light, enables him to conceive its genuine effect, and thus puts it in his power to judge, whether it ought to be rejected or retained."²⁸ Hence, judgement approves the inventions that fit to a design, and rejects those which do not. In this way, the artist, or musician, could use their fancy to experiment with a variety of possible interpretations. They could then use their taste in a structured operation, as opposed to an arbitrary or random selection, to choose which iterations of an experiment are most suitable for their overall design. Put more specifically, this selects the inventions that most clearly and effectively paint a specific shade of a passion in service of rhetorical *telos*. Arguably, performing artists must often make this negotiation in real-time: a form of responsive *kairos*.

Throughout the eighteenth century, various writers sought to define what taste was, whether it was universal or subjective, innate or learned, and how it functioned in both creating and responding to works of art. In 1712, in his widely disseminated newspaper, *The Spectator*, Joseph Addison defined taste as a refined and cultivated faculty of perception and judgment that allowed spectators to partake in the "Pleasures of the Imagination." It is an ability to discern beauty, harmony, and propriety, whether in nature, art, or behaviour. It is both a natural faculty and one that can be improved through education, exposure, and reflection.²⁹ In 1726, Charles Rollin believed that taste was "a kind of natural reason wrought up to perfection by study," that is, the training of the imagination via the formation of good habits and further noted that it "serves [...] to guide and direct the understanding. It makes use of the imagination, but without submitting to it, and keeps it always in subjection ...[and] never suffers itself to be dazzled with falsehood."³⁰ David Hume famously argued in *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757) that taste could vary among individuals but the stability of taste (Hume notes that Homer's genius was valued just as highly in antiquity as it is in his own day) was also governed by certain shared principles

²⁷ Cicero. *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, trans. H. M. Hubbell, Loeb Classical Library 386 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 386.

²⁸ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 58.

²⁹ See Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* No. 409 (1712).

³⁰ Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*, vol. 1, p. 49.

that allowed for the development of “true Judges” or authoritative critics.³¹ Edmund Burke, in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759), explored how aesthetic evaluations are shaped by emotional and physiological responses, linking taste to sentimental experience. In his *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783), Blair defines taste as “the power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art.”³² Furthermore, taste is cultivated by “attention to the most approved models, study of the best authors, comparisons of lower and higher degrees of the same beauties, operate towards the refinement of Taste.”³³ For Blair, taste is intuitive, relying on sensibility. It is not achieved through a rational process or “a discovery of the understanding” or “a deduction of argument”; objects of taste “strike us intuitively, and make a strong impression.”³⁴ Blair though believes that this taste can be “cultivated” through education and examination of “proper Models” through criticism.³⁵ In contrast to these theories of taste that rely on “cultivation”, Kant’s *Kritik der Urteilkraft* (1790) proposes that taste is defined as the ability to judge something as beautiful through a “disinterested” and universal feeling of pleasure. For Kant, taste does not depend on personal desires or utility, but on a kind of shared sensibility, where a judgment of beauty claims universal assent while remaining founded in subjective experience.

However, in the aesthetics of sensibility, taste was more than a philosophical quandary: it was a practical concern for working artists. Writers such as Sulzer brought theories of taste to bear on questions of artistic aesthetics and the *telos* of a work. In his *Allgemeine Theorie*, Sulzer links judgement to clarity and intentionality, observing:

One sees all too often works whose author had no idea what he was trying to do. Haven’t we heard enough concerts in which the composer seems to have intended only to make sheer noise by wandering from one key to another? [...] Such a lack of clear intention can turn a work into nothing less than an enigma.³⁶

For Sulzer, a good musical composition lies not in multiplicity of ideas generated by the imagination, but the unity of design and intentionality that results from judgement. Such multiplicity of modulations creates the “chaos” Gerard described, “sheer noise” that is enigmatic. He later continues:

Every good work of art must have a fundamental purpose against which everything can be measured. Where no purpose can be discovered, the invention cannot be judged. In reality one often finds works of art whose author had no clear idea as to a goal. Consequently the

³¹ For further reading, see David Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste* (London: 1757).

³² Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 19.

³³ Ibid., pp. 24–25

³⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

³⁵ For further reading, see “Sect. II: Taste” in Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, pp. 19–45; “Sect. III: Criticism” in ibid., pp. 46–71.

³⁶ Sulzer, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, p. 59.

work lacked invention. The parts are cobbled together haphazardly following the fantasy of the artist, but without any connecting thread to tie them together.³⁷

Furthermore, Sulzer notes that effective art works must be guided by *telos*:

Whenever after careful contemplation one cannot discover how the parts of some work cohere, or what the aim of the artists invention is, one has good reason for supposing that the invention itself is faulty. [...] A painting in which no one can tell what the painter had in mind is deficient at least in respect to its invention, despite whatever pleasing lines or colors it may have.³⁸

Sulzer critiques artistic works that are driven purely by fantasy without a guiding idea or structure, describing them as fragmented and incoherent—an aesthetic failure not due to lack of imagination, but due to the absence of judgment and taste. Without such faculties, the work will become enigmatic and fail to achieve its *telos* when appraised by audiences. This is precisely what Gerard warns against. In this view, the artist may have brilliant ideas, but without strong judgement and taste, those ideas remain private and disjointed, lacking persuasive power.

How can these accounts of taste from various eighteenth-century writers become relevant for the rhetorical framework proposed in this study? Rather than taking this diversity of accounts as proof of a relativism of taste, this study will adopt a structured rhetorical model of taste that can still be discerned across many eighteenth-century writers. In this proposed model, taste is not—contrary to its common modern framing—an ineffable, private preference that lies beyond explanation or justification. It is treated as a mediating faculty that regulates the coupling between inner feeling and outward expression: it shapes how feelings are expressed, selects among available commonplaces and schemata, and judges whether the resulting signs are both natural and fitting. Such a conception is broadly compatible with rhetorical theory, with the Bolevian sublime, Lessing's corporeal eloquence, with Gerard's theory of genius, and with the more explicitly musical theorists. By drawing on this family of positions, the study will treat taste as a workable historical aesthetic concept for both producer and receiver: a shared, though cultivated, standard that guides creative decisions and listening habits, ensuring that inner movements of feeling find their way into forms that can be recognised, evaluated, and emotionally appropriated by others.

Gerard's conception of taste breaks it into interrelated sub-faculties: *sensibility of taste*, *refinement of taste*, *correctness of taste*, and the unified *perfection* of these principles.³⁹ Each plays a distinct role in coupling inner feeling to outward expression. In what follows, each of these dimensions of taste will be examined in turn.

³⁷ Sulzer, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, p. 63.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 63.

³⁹ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 301.

5.4.1 Sensibility of Taste

As has already been discussed extensively elsewhere in this study, sensibility, that cornerstone of eighteenth-century culture, laid the foundation of taste. Gerard notes that sensibility “makes a person feel strongly every beauty or blemish which he perceives.”⁴⁰ In Gerard’s account of genius, it refers specifically to the sensitivity and delicacy of perception that allows individuals to feel and recognize aesthetic qualities in an idea or object. A person with potent sensibility is more affected by artistic and natural experiences; hence, as a component of aesthetic evaluation, sensibility will help Gerard’s artist judge his/her inventions for fitness.

5.4.2 Refinement of Taste

While sensibility is response to affect, refinement is the degree of subtlety it can discern: a sort of fine focus for sensibility. As Gerard notes, “refinement of taste leads imagination to reject whatever is coarse, or of inferior beauty, and, penetrating into such beauties as are most latent, feeling such as are most delicate, [...] it enables them to affect and give an impulse to fancy, and directs it to produce not only what is beautiful, but what is elegant.”⁴¹ In this view, refinement thus involves the ability to discern and distinguish subtle degrees of aesthetic quality, recognizing what is noble, elegant, and graceful, and rejecting what is coarse or vulgar. Furthermore, refinement enables the mind to sift through aesthetic impressions and focus on those which most deserve attention and admiration. For example, a musician showing refined taste might identify slight gradations of passion and be sensitive to nuanced transitions within a musical work, while a lesser musician would have difficulty discerning these more granular differences. Perhaps like a chef smothering *foie gras* with ketchup, the lesser musician would paint over the subtleties with a coarse brush, and consequently not highlight them to the degree demanded. Such careful shading was noted by Burgh. Paraphrasing Cicero, Burgh notes in the *Art of Public Speaking* (1761) that:

Cicero, very judiciously, directs that a public speaker *remit*, from time to time, somewhat of the *vehemence* of his action, and not utter every passage with *all the force he can*; to set off, the more strongly, the *more emphatical parts*; as the painters, by means of shades properly placed, make their figures stand out bolder.⁴²

Burgh illustrates the concept of refinement by emphasizing modulation of force in public speaking, such that not every passage should be delivered with maximum vehemence. Burgh’s analogy to painting, using shadow to make the figure “stand out bolder,” further reinforces that refinement is not just about delicacy, but about control, contrast, and proportion. It allows the speaker, musician, or artist to draw the listener’s attention to certain ideas they seek to highlight by orchestrating degrees of emphasis, rather than offending, boring, or confusing them with a monotony of constant intensity.

⁴⁰ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 406.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 407.

⁴² Burgh, *The Art of Public Speaking, A New Edition*, p. 11.

Similarly, observations and analogies to painting were made by Avison in his *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752). Avison relates “colouring” to harmony and stresses the importance of “light and shade” to guide the eye. Comparably, in music, light and shade, as well as release and tension, are analogous to consonance and dissonance, and “the judicious Mixture of Concords and Discords is equally essential to a musical Composition.”⁴³ Schubart also noted how sensibility led the musician to detect and embody consonance and dissonance.⁴⁴ It follows that in this view, the artful application of musical shading would result from a refinement of taste, discernment of the multitudes of harmonic possibilities in their varying degrees of consonance and dissonance.

5.4.3 Correctness of Taste

In Gerard’s account, correctness refers to a conformity to aesthetic norms, principles or *doxa*. Contrary to how it may first appear, it does not deal with or invalidate questions of expressive subjectivity. As Gerard notes, correctness “secures a person from approving any but real beauties.”⁴⁵ It involves questions of *telos*: “fitness,” “accuracy,” and “appropriateness” of an expression to aesthetic goals, and rejects false expressions, spurious beauties, and affectation. Similarly to Gerard’s notion of correctness, in 1752, Friedrich Melchior Grimm developed an aesthetic notion of *contre-sens*, literally “against [the] sense,” defended in his *Lettre sur l’Omphale* during the *Querelle des Bouffons*. In this original context, “contresens” is a rhetorical flaw that can be roughly translated as “misinterpretation,” “mistranslation,” or “false reading.” Grimm’s *contre-sens* refers directly to the rhetorical “mistake” that arises when the affect of music and text contradict one another: an error against “dramatic unity.”⁴⁶ In these cases, the *telos* becomes confused. For example, imagine an opera aria with a sad text, accompanied by music that affects joy. This idea was developed further by Rousseau in his contributions to Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* (1754), where he defines it in terms of music:

“contresens” in the expression, when the music is sad instead of happy [. . .]; light-hearted instead of grievous [. . .]; “contresens” in the declamation, when one expresses through the same melody different or opposed feelings, when one paints the words more than the feelings, when one gives too much weight to details which should only be touched upon⁴⁷

⁴³ Avison, *An Essay on Musical Expression*, p. 25.

⁴⁴ See 5.1.

⁴⁵ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 408.

⁴⁶ Jacqueline Waerber, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘Unité de Mélodie’”, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, vol. 62, no. 1, (2009), p. 97.

⁴⁷ [. . .] *contre-sens* dans l’expression, lorsque la Musique est triste au lieu d’être gaie [. . .]; légère au lieu d’être grave; [. . .] *contre-sens* dans la prosodie, lorsqu’on est bref sur les syllabes longues, long sur des syllabes breves; [. . .] *contre-sens* dans la déclamation, lorsqu’on y exprime par la même modulation des sentimens différens ou opposés, lorsqu’on y peint les mots plus que le sentiment, lorsqu’on s’y appesantit sur des détails sur lesquels on doit glisser [. . .].” Jean le Rond d’Alembert, article CONTRESENS, EN MUSIQUE, Diderot and d’Alembert, *Encyclopédie* 4 (1754): 141 ; in Waerber, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ‘Unité de Mélodie’”, p. 100.

For Rousseau, a *contresens* is a misreading of sentiment—a failure not of technique, but of judgment, where the performer imposes an inappropriate emotional character on the music that does not fit its design. This is precisely the error that Gerard’s notion of correctness seeks to avoid. A performer with correct taste knows not only how to interpret musical *topoi*, but when and why to do so, in service of rhetorical *telos*.

Correctness of taste may also be considered in the domain of outward embodied expression and corporeal eloquence. For example, in an observation that parallels Lessing’s,⁴⁸ Burgh notes that a speaker

may, either through incurable natural *deficiency*, or by deviating into some incorrigible *absurdity* of manner, express the *real* and *warm* sentiments in his *heart*, in such an *awkward* way as shall effectually *defeat* his whole design upon those who hear him, and render *himself* the object of their ridicule.⁴⁹

What Burgh presents here is an “incorrect” coupling between inner feeling and outer sign. For example, an orator who kindles sadness inside but projects a joyful air, would have an incorrect taste if their rhetorical aim was to express sadness to the audience. In this sense, the orator has not properly deployed commonplaces. Correctness, in Gerard’s terms, refers to the congruency between the expressive means and the intended effect, and this essentially draws upon commonplaces to avoid enigmatic or overly idiosyncratic expressions. This is precisely what Burgh warns against: personal emotional authenticity alone is not enough—it must be conveyed in a suitable, socially intelligible form through cultivation of corporeal eloquence, which taps into the *doxa* of the audience. Burgh uses this as an argument for rhetorical education: to train delivery with the more conventionalized schemata drawn from emotional commonplaces such that the internal sentiment reflexively links to these commonplaces.

5.4.4 Perfection of Taste

A full picture of taste, according to Gerard, only arises as a holistic union of sensibility, correctness, and refinement. If “any principle of taste be wanting, or weak in comparison with the rest, imagination misses both the regulation and the impulse which that principle would have given it.”⁵⁰ The harmonious operation of taste can be shown in illustrated examples.

For instance, Burgh notes that in the expression of passions, their nature and degree must be appropriate. He notes that “A *hero* may shew *fear*, or *sensibility* of *pain*; but not in the same *manner* as a *girl* would express these sensations.”⁵¹ In this way, the *correctness* of taste relies on *refinement*, in its ability to distinguish the degrees of intensity and quality of the passion when expressed in the hero

⁴⁸ See Chapter 4.1.3

⁴⁹ Burgh, *The Art of Public Speaking, A New Edition*, pp. 28–29.

⁵⁰ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 410.

⁵¹ Burgh, *The Art of Public Speaking, A New Edition*, p. 27.

versus the young girl. While fear has annexed to it certain basic tones and gestures, their expression and intensity vary significantly in these different characters, and portraying fear in the manner of a young girl in a mythological hero would evoke the comic rather than the tragic mode. Furthermore, recall the concept of *kairos* as the orator's ability to sense "the right moment." This rhetorical principle applies Gerard's model of taste in the real-time moment of a performance. The effectiveness of an actor's gesture, an orator's tone, or a soloist's cadenza depends not only on their intrinsic quality, but on how well they fit the moment: how attuned they are to the flow of action and the perceptual readiness of the audience.

In his *Versuch*, C.P.E. Bach often asks his readers to make performance decisions in a similar way. For example, talking about choosing the right tempo, he notes:

Some people play too cautiously, as if they had glue between their fingers. Their touch is too long, allowing the notes to linger beyond their time. Others have tried to improve this and play too short, as if the keys were red-hot. But that is also bad. The middle ground is best; I am speaking in general terms here; all types of touch are good at the right time.⁵²

Bach's contrast between "glue" and "red-hot" touch is a lesson on the refinement of taste. Both extremes fail not because they break a rule, but because they replace responsive judgement with habit (an imposed feature from the outside): one lets tones linger past their rhetorical due, the other clips them into nervous dryness. His appeal to the "middle ground" is therefore not a mechanical moderation so much as a claim about the performer's ability to discriminate how much contact, weight, and duration a given moment can bear. Bach immediately adds the crucial *proviso*: "all types of touch are good at the right time." Here correctness of taste means propriety—choosing what is fitting to the design, affect, and context—rather than a single baseline "correct" articulation. In this view, touch becomes an act of *kairos*: the note is released when the player knows the opportune moment, not according to a fixed doctrine.

In his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Lessing further demonstrates the concept of *kairos* and the "perfection" of taste, by reflecting on a famous speech from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Hamlet instructs actors on effective acting:

every word that he puts into Hamlet's mouth when he instructs the players is a golden rule for all actors who strive for honest acclaim. Among other things, he has him say to the comedians, "Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the

⁵² Einige Personen spielen zu klebericht, als wenn sie Leim zwischen den Fingern hätten. Ihr Anschlag ist zu lang, indem sie die Noten über die Zeit liegen lassen. Andere haben es verbessern wollen, und spielen zu kurz; als wenn die Tasten glühend wären. Es thut aber auch schlecht. Die Mittelstrasse ist die beste; ich rede hievon überhaupt; alle Arten des Anschlages sind zur rechten Zeit gut. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 1st edition, Part I, p. 118 (§6).

very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.”

People talk a lot about the fiery passion of an actor; they argue with each other over whether an actor can have too much fire. Where those who claim that it is possible point out as evidence that an actor was too fierce in the wrong place, or at the very least might have been fiercer than the conditions required; then those who disagree might very well respond that in such cases the actor showed not too much fire but rather too little sense. After all, it really depends on what we understand by the word fire. If shouting and contortions are fire, then it is indisputable that the actor can go too far with it. If fire, however, consists in the speed and liveliness with which all the attributes of the actor combine to give his performance the appearance of truth, then to argue that it is possible for the actor to apply too much fire in this sense is to assume that we do not wish to see the appearance of truth driven to the utmost illusion. It thus cannot be this fire, either, that Shakespeare demands be restrained, even in the flowing current, in the storm, in the whirlwind of passion: he must clearly mean the violence of voice and of movements; and it is easy to see the reason why, in places where the playwright has not observed the slightest moderation, the actor must nevertheless restrain himself in both respects. There are few voices that do not become obnoxious in their most extreme exertion; and all-too-quick, all-too-stormy movements are seldom noble. Neither our eyes nor our ears should be injured; and it is only when actors avoid everything that could be unpleasant to these, in their expression of strong passions, that they will have that smoothness and suppleness that a Hamlet demands of them – even under circumstances in which they are to make the greatest impression and frighten awake the conscience of the unrepentant sinner.⁵³

For Lessing, as for Gerard, the performer’s success lies not in raw intensity or technical virtuosity alone, but in the judicious timing and calibration of expression. The actor must not only embody fire, or that liveliness and intensity of sentimental expression, but know when and how to let it burn—when to hold back, when to strike, and how to maintain aesthetic balance in the heat of dramatic action. Moreover, Lessing’s interpretation shows that genuine artistry lies not in excess or restraint alone, but in judgement and taste. An actor of “too little sense” is deficient in judgement and taste. Firstly, Lessing affirms the need for sensibility, the emotional responsiveness that Gerard sees as the foundation of all taste. This true “fire” is not in the form of exaggerated gestures or loud outbursts, but in the immediacy of the fancy that gives the performance its “appearance of truth.” This kind of fire is not external display but the liveliness of inward feeling, made visible and audible through the unity of voice, gesture, and imagination. However, this fire must be shaped by refinement, distinguishing degrees of intensity and avoiding vulgarity. Excessive passion used in inappropriate places becomes coarse, obnoxious, ignoble, and ineffective; it tires and annoys the audience rather than moving them. In the worst case, it could

⁵³ Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 5, §12–13.

make the actor the centre of ridicule for laughable histrion city. Contrastingly, not using enough fire when more should have been used will lead to indifference and boredom in the audience. Refinement, then, is the actor's ability to know how much is enough, to express intensity without losing grace, and to preserve nobility in the midst of stormy emotion. Finally, the notion of correctness is also addressed in Lessing's critique. When an actor is "too fierce in the wrong place," the problem is not intensity itself, but its misplacement. Correctness ensures that the emotion fits the character, the moment, and the logic of the scene. This is what Hamlet calls "temperance," the rhetorical virtue that allows power to emerge not from noisy vociferation, but from proportion and intent.

A musical analogue that parallels Lessing's reflection on the actor's "fire" was written by Georg Joseph Vogler in 1807, reflecting on "good taste" in keyboard playing. Vogler stresses the need for what Lessing called "temperance" and "smoothness" especially to avoid damaging fragile early keyboard instruments which do not respond well to excessive force:

Keyboard drummers [*Clavierpauker*] and profane people are to keyboard instruments what floods and hailstorms are to crops. They break the strings by the dozens, bend the tangents, knock the hammers loose and generally cause the most dreadful havoc. By keyboard drummers I mean all those wrong-minded heads who think they are doing a splendid deed when they strike the keyboard with all their might and make a hideous rattling and clattering noise. However, I don't want to speak out in favour of the timid slinkers who, out of sheer delicacy, do not know whether they should touch the keyboard or not. This squeamish and powerless way of playing and the clumsy and rumbling way are two extremes that a tasteful keyboard player must avoid.⁵⁴

Vogler's condemnation of both "keyboard drummers" and "timid slinkers" echoes Lessing's insights into theatrical expression. Vogler, like Lessing, understands that true artistic power lies in refinement—not in the absence of feeling, but in its controlled, proportionate expression. His description of the two extremes: aggressive, percussive banging on the one hand, and insipid hesitation on the other, illustrates that fundamental aesthetic principle: imaginative expression must be guided by judgment and taste. The "keyboard drummers" may possess energy and enthusiasm (a crude form of sensibility), but they lack refinement—the ability to recognize subtleties and avoid brutishness—and correctness, or the fitness of their expression to the instrument, style, and musical context.

⁵⁴ Clavierpauker und Profane sind für die Clavierinstrumente eben das, was die Schloßen und Hagelwetter für die Feldfrüchte sind. Sie sprengen die Saiten zu Dutzenden, schlagen die Tangenten krumm, die Hämmer los, und richten überhaupt die gräßlichsten Verwüstungen an. Unter den Clavierpaukern verstehe ich alle die schiefen Köpfe, welche eine glänzende That zu thun glauben, wenn sie aus Leibeskräften auf die Claviatur losschlagen und ein ganz abscheuliches Gerassel und Gerappel erregen. Doch will ich hiemit auf keinen Fall den ängstlichen Schleichern das Wort reden, welche aus purer Delikatesse nicht wissen, ob sie die Claves berühren sollen oder nicht. Diese zimperliche und kraftlose Spielart und jene holprige und polternde sind zwei Extreme, welche ein geschmackvoller Clavierspieler vermeiden muß. Georg Joseph Vogler, *Gründliche Anleitung zum Clavierstimmen* (Stuttgart: 1807), p. 16.

Taking this view, playing “with passion” does not arise from barbarous hammering on a keyboard: it comes from perfection of taste and developing an understanding of the subtleties of the whole palette of human sentimental experience in all its shades and colours. For example, even in the most audacious moments of a stormy Beethoven sonata, the player should not abuse their instrument, believing they evoke the Sublime. On the contrary, this will not only damage the instrument, but lead to a monotony of intensity, not bringing out variety in light and shade that Burgh valued, which will eventually offend the ears of the listeners for its incessant vulgarity. Conversely, the “timid slinkers” might exhibit an exaggerated or affectatious notion of delicacy, but without the vitality, confidence, and immediacy that sensibility and correctness demand. For these reasons, stormy passions are arguably expressed more easily than subtle, tender ones because making much noise and violence is easy. Within the aesthetics of sensibility and taste, expressing subtle, delicate, yet earnest sentiments requires a high refinement of taste. If this refinement is not found, beautiful Adagios could be rendered stiff, awkward, empty, or tedious, for the same reasons Edward Ferrar’s dry recitation of Cowper in Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* failed to impress Marianne.⁵⁵ In this way, just as the actor must balance fire with control, the musician ought to balance intensity with precision, force with grace, and expression with appropriateness. In both cases, the performer’s role is to serve the rhetorical and aesthetic aims of the piece—to move the passions of the audience, not move them out of their seats by offending or boring them.

Circling back to Mozart’s earlier jab at Clementi for lacking both “feeling” and “taste,”⁵⁶ this rhetorical model of taste helps clarify what such a verdict implies in everyday eighteenth-century terms. Taste is not an ineffable private preference. To “lack taste” implies a kind of insensibility or coarseness in selection and shaping: a failure to register the expressive demands of the moment, to be animated by a fiery sensibility yet moderated by what is appropriate. It is, in other words, an inability to use sensibility as a faculty of discernment—to sense what fits and what does not, how much or how little is required, and what degree of emphasis is fitting to the work’s overall design.

5.5 Historical Taste versus Modern Taste

Seen from this perspective, the two common modern “solutions” to expressiveness in classical music performance identified in Chapter 4.4.2 miss the ideals of taste in the aesthetics of sensibility posited here. Both of these modern propensities, including text-literalism and “brilliant” virtuosity, lack taste when considered within the aesthetic framework of sensibility because their “insensitivity” to sentimental features flattens the sentiments that arguably should be expressed with more clarity and immediacy. In this way, they do not exemplify the various components of taste (sense, refinement, correctness, and union) in a way that is oriented to the aesthetics of sensibility. For example, a text-

⁵⁵ See p. 64.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 1.4.

literalist might flatten the passions in a musical work through a calculated delivery, while a virtuoso might overshoot the mark, turning, for instance, an idyllic pastoral melody into something excessively energetic (i.e. overly homogeneously loud and fast). Both streams show a kind of “insensibility” in the eighteenth-century sense. The reason for this is that both reorient performance away from a work’s original rhetorical *telos* and the contingencies of *kairos* that the historical model of taste was meant to serve.

None of this criticism is meant as a moral indictment of modern musicianship; these tendencies often grow out of norms, real pressures, and admirable aims. Modern musicians working within these paradigms have taste: just not a taste oriented to the aesthetics of sensibility. In that sense, the feedback-loop of feeling and sensibility—Hill’s “Mazy Round” set in motion between what is played, what is heard, and what is felt—will never be a neutral mechanism. It is always calibrated to a kind of taste in Gerard’s sense, just not necessarily one that is historically situated. If the ear is trained primarily for text-literalist taste, the mazy round that turns will be a contemporary one rather than a period one. A comparable phenomenon arises in the opposite, “brilliant” virtuosic taste: here too the ear is cultivated, but the training is oriented toward projection, speed, and polish as surrogates for more granulated affect, thus bypassing the period’s rhetorical communicative ideals. Consequently, the calibration of taste facilitated by the mazy round is always present: from the most bombastic virtuosos to the most restrained urtext-literalists, performers still hear themselves as refined and correct and feel that they do justice to what they perform. Accordingly, taste is operating, just cultivated under different assumptions, and audiences oriented to such taste may also respond with approbation. Orienting the ear to the aesthetics of sensibility involves training the ear and the heart to listen and respond to the period’s expressive clues. Without this training, those clues will often remain inaudible, and the score’s rhetoric will be under-realized.

It bears emphasising that even the most conscientious HIP performer—working carefully through the principles of sensibility and taste outlined in this rhetorical framework—cannot be guaranteed to produce results that resemble the sensibility or taste of the past. The “inputs” to Hill’s Mazy Round may be oriented toward historical sources, instruments, and techniques, but they will always be refracted through the performer’s present-day training, cultural norms, listening habits, institutional pressures, and the wider conditions of modern musical life. Nor is it finally possible to verify whether what emerges would have cohered with the historical paradigm as it was lived and heard at the time. This is not a problem for the approach advocated in this study, because its aim is not to certify an “authentic replica,” but to adopt a historically inspired mode of reasoning and listening that productively reorients contemporary practice.⁵⁷ With that proviso in view, the argument presented here is that HIP becomes most illuminating when it allows the repertoire to be heard through the listening

⁵⁷ See Introduction, Historically Inspired Performance on p. 31.

assumptions of the “period ears” that originally formed it. Considered here, this means an aesthetic in which “passion” is neither a matter of sheer intensity nor something relegated by text-fidelity to a secondary consideration, but communicable and experienced as infectious affectivity. This requires not only a different way of playing, but a different way of listening: a mode oriented towards a period sensibility rather than one based on some other (modern) system of taste. A cultivated, historically inspired “tasteful” ear—on the part of performers and listeners alike—is responsive to such “pleasures of the Imagination” (as Addison would have called them): its refinement is sensitive to the score’s invitations, it senses fitting proportion and timing, and it hears potentialities for expression that an uncultivated ear simply does not perceive. This ear, as Schubart observed, was connected to the heart, and these details are “felt” and “experienced” as sentiment.

5.6 Reframing the Interpretation of Period Pedagogical Materials

Could these eighteenth-century concepts of genius offer a more fruitful model for modern HIP pedagogy than “historical correctness” alone? Rather than treating past styles as a bundle of external features—bowings, articulations, ornaments, pedaling markings, codified commonplaces, gestures, etc.—attached to a work like tags in a semiotic code, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers arguably invite a different reading: style is what emerges when taste regulates the coupling between inner feeling and outward form in both artist and audience. On this view, “being stylistic” is not just reproducing period signs, but allowing sensibility, imagination, and judgment to interact so that expression feels right and reads right within a given community. In this way, the performer and audience live a style. Taste governs which affects are appropriate, which commonplaces are chosen, how far intensity can be pushed, and how nature is “improved” by art.

In such a rhetorically minded framework, taste can extend the notion of “HIP” as an organizing ideal. Instead of asking, “Is this historically accurate?” in a narrow technical sense, the more eighteenth-century question is, “Does this way of playing persuade the kind of audience whose feelings I aim to move?” Taste here is not arbitrary; as Gerard, Blair, Sulzer, Lessing, Forkel, and others suggest, it is cultivated through exposure to good models, through practice in judgment, and through interdisciplinary experience—poetry, drama, pantomime, painting, rhetoric—in a program of cultivating corporeal eloquence. Gerard’s “frequent exercise of judgement” trains the imagination to operate with “regularity and correctness,”¹ discovering at once the ideas that serve its purpose and discarding those that obstruct it. Blair’s cultivated taste becomes a “natural sensibility to beauty,”² an apparently intuitive but in fact trained response. This is exactly the faculty that strengthens coupling between inner feeling and outer expression via external features: it lets sensibility drive invention, while ensuring that the resulting signs remain clear, noble, and proportionate.

¹ Gerard, *An Essay on Genius*, p. 313.

² Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 27.

Such a model also makes the audience an active partner in aesthetic experience. Because taste is shared (though differently cultivated), the orator must orient their rhetoric toward those they wish to persuade, shaping embodied delivery so that the felt pathos becomes *intersubjective*, not merely private. The audience's own taste and sensibility complete the circuit: they recognize, endorse, or reject the expressive claims being made. In this light, the rhetorical project of corporeal eloquence can be read less as a set of antiquarian "rules" for gesturing and more as a pedagogy for forming taste in and through the body—teaching performers to let inner movements of feeling habitually issue in legible, beautiful signs. For historically minded musicians, this suggests a shift in emphasis: from collecting external style-markers to cultivating a historically inspired notion of taste, imagination, sensibility, and rhetorical judgment / evaluation that eighteenth-century writers themselves regarded as the true ground of expression

The cultivation of taste was closely bound up with orientation toward good models, and this task became central to both rhetorical and musical education. It operated across both the "objective" and "subjective" domains. Musicians like Hummel divide delivery or *Vortrag* into two dimensions: *correctness* of execution—what can be taught, regulated, and examined as technical and stylistic rules—and the *beauty* of delivery, the realm of sentiment and aesthetic experience that truly moves the listener.³ Strikingly, much keyboard-tutor literature between roughly 1740 and 1830 appears more preoccupied with the first dimension. Fingering systems, technical facility, ornaments, posture, even hand shape occupy page after page; explicit discussion of pathos is often briefer. This can seem ambivalent—if not at odds—with contemporary praise of nature, spontaneity, and sincerity, until one recognizes these manuals as instruments for forming taste and reliable coupling, not as full portraits of artistic life.

Within this landscape, one can roughly distinguish three tendencies. At one pole stand sentimentally focused texts such as C.P.E. Bach, Türk, Hummel, or Montgeroult's *Cours complet* (1816–20), which speak directly of pathos and the performer's duty to move the listener, consistently subordinating technique to sentiment. Closer to the centre sit more balanced methods like Clementi's *Introduction to the Art of Playing on the Piano Forte*, Op. 42 (1801), or Cramer's *Instructions for the Piano Forte* (1812), where expression is acknowledged but embedded within a clearly structured technical syllabus and progressive drills. At the opposite pole are standardizing methods such as Milchmeyer's *Die wahre Art das Pianoforte zu spielen* (1797) or Czerny's *Vollständige theoretisch-praktische Pianoforte-Schule*, Op. 500 (1839), which prioritizes prescriptive technique and rote learning, reducing expression to scattered maxims. Yet the boundaries between "mechanical" and "feeling" books are porous: the more mechanical authors still concede the indispensability of feeling, while

³ See p. 54.

“feeling” authors insist on a clean mechanism. Both camps implicitly assume that tasteful expression presupposes dependable technique.

In the period, a similar focus on notated precision also occurs in elocutionary pedagogy. Writers such as Gustav von Seckendorf, John Walker and Gilbert Austin developed detailed systems of notation and exercises that, to modern eyes, may appear overly granular or even pedantic. For example, in his *Rhetorical Grammar* (1785), Walker gives hundreds of sentences to exercise correct emphasis and inflection, while in his *Melody of Speaking Delineated* (1787), he uses symbols to granularly denote inflections, pauses and passions, word by word, in many example speeches. Similarly, in his *Chironomia* (1806), Austin devises a complex system to notate rhetorical gestures and applies it to several literary works. Such approaches have often been viewed with derision by modern commentators. For instance, in Wilbur Samuel Howell’s view, the British elocutionists “made rhetoric appear to be the art of declaiming a speech by rote, without regard to whether the thought uttered were trivial or false or dangerous,” a development he sees as contributing to rhetoric’s fall from intellectual respectability.⁴

This “rote” turn may be traced to sociological factors related the rise of bourgeoisie culture in the early nineteenth century. Romantic ideology split “feeling” from “rules”: public rhetoric exalted instinct and genius, while pedagogy quietly concentrated on what can actually be taught. As Hummel noted, it was difficult to teach feeling, which must be “awakened,” so hence his treatise focuses mostly on rules of execution.⁵ Various writers of the early nineteenth century observed that composers of their time sought greater notational control, and expressive precision was further “outsourced” to the composer’s ever more detailed notation. The violinist Pierre Baillot remarks that modern composers, “especially Beethoven,” employ a far greater number of signs and notate them with extreme care, so that everything pertaining to execution, character, and expression is written into the score.⁶ The pianist Carl Czerny urges the student to observe “in the strictest manner” everything that each composer has indicated in the score, including character, tempo and dynamics, and to execute each piece “in the time indicated by the author.”⁷ This is arguably a primary witness for the idea that notation itself is becoming the principal vehicle of expressive instruction.

But perhaps understanding this “rote” pedagogy for both elocution and music in the context of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century thought will provide the most compelling explanation for reframing how these manuals can be used by modern HIP practitioners. Arguably, these systems were

⁴ Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 713.

⁵ geweckt, gebildet, erhöht und verfeinert, aber nicht eigentlich gelehrt ... Hummel, *Ausführliche theoretisch-practische Anweisung zum Piano-Forte-Spiel*, Part III, “Zweiter Abschnitt. Erstes Kapitel. Vom Vortrage überhaupt,” §1, p. 426.

⁶ modern composers “ont employé un plus grand nombre de signes, et les ont notés avec un soin extrême, pour tout ce qui concerne l’exécution, le caractère et l’expression des ouvrages.” Pierre Baillot, *L’art du violon* (Paris: 1834), p. 204.

⁷ Carl Czerny, *Letters to a Young Lady, on the Art of Playing the Pianoforte* (London: 1840), letter IV, pp. 41–42.

not meant to replace spontaneity or feeling, but to train the body and voice to respond habitually, intuitively, and expressively in accordance with the project of corporeal eloquence. In this way, the apparent rigidity of expressive exercises served the same purpose as taste in Gerard's philosophy: shaping raw imagination and sensibility into forms that were coherent and persuasive. As the *British Critic* observed of Austin's *Chironomia* (1806):

The rules which he has laid down [...] would substitute grace for awkwardness, and elegance for deformity. But much is yet to be left to the genius and abilities of the pupil [...] If he would attain the highest pitch of an orator's glory, he must leave at a distance those mechanical rules [...] What rules of artificial measurement can take the altitude of a thought, or note the angle of incidence of an eye-glance? [...] the ardent look which darts into the recesses of the soul—the impassioned gesture which knows not the trammels of art.⁸

This review underscores that mechanical rules, or external features, are not ends in themselves but foundations for inhabitation by inner feeling. Just as Gerard argued that rules guide rather than constrain genius, the critic sees Austin's principles as necessary correctives that ultimately give way to the orator's spontaneous, expressive power. Similarly, Walker responded to such objections with a practical defense of notation and technique, arguing that mastery requires descending to particulars: "A single rule that teaches us where to pause, and how to inflect the voice [...] is of more real service than volumes of oratory upon oratory."⁹

Seen in the context of eighteenth-century thought, however, these manuals have a more positive rhetorical logic and can be reframed for modern HIP. Both keyboard and declamation/elocution treatises participate in a larger project: cultivating taste by training imagination, judgment, and expressive faculties through disciplined, embodied practice. John Gregory's *Essay on Taste* (1765) makes this mechanism unusually clear:

When a particular idea is presented, the imagination dwells upon it, cloaths it with a variety of circumstances, runs from it to other ideas that are connected with it, and furnishes such a picture of the object represented by that idea, as will infallibly produce a suitable affection. Now if we examine the colours which imagination throws upon our ideas, in order to enable them to excite the passions, we shall find, that the greatest part of them are extracted from the sentiments of taste.¹⁰

Assuming a person of sensibility, Gregory shows how, once an idea is given, imagination elaborates it—"clothes" it, associates it, impassions it—until it becomes affectively charged. The "colours" that make it moving for others are drawn from taste. Read alongside Gerard, a division of labour emerges:

⁸ *British Critic, and Quarterly Theological Review 1808*: Vol 31 (London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, 1808), p. 605.

⁹ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 348.

¹⁰ John Gregory, *A Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man. With those of the Animal World* (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), p. 73.

imagination supplies abundance by association and synthesis; taste regulates this abundance through decorum, proportion, and style, steering habitual pathways of invention. In this light, even an increasingly detailed musical notation does not abolish sensibility or fancy; it simply furnishes more determinate starting points to lead the performer to the pathos-laden ideas. For a performer of sensibility, fidelity to the notation does not mean evacuating inner feeling. Rather, each sign—*sf*, crescendo, slur, tempo indication—becomes the “particular idea” which imagination clothes and animates, finding within its constraints room for shading, pacing, and individual character. Hence, Gregory’s model helps explain why period pedagogies can look so procedural without being anti-expressive. Their apparently mechanical character is the means by which they form the reflexive taste that gives ideas their colour and turns them into moving expression. Rules, drills, and even dense markings are not meant to freeze imagination, but to give it a well-ordered repertoire of gestures, patterns, and responses—bodily and musical—within which sensibility can still act freely. When feeling is genuinely stirred, it can couple to these outward signs rather than bypass them, selecting and inflecting what is written instead of ignoring it.

This stands in contrast to modern literalism or text-fetishism in HIP and mainstream classical music practice, where “following the score” is often imagined as excluding personal intervention. Dreyfus’s critique of HIP helps explain why this balance is often lost.¹¹ An ideology that privileges measurable correctness encourages a selective reading of pedagogical tutors: tables of fingerings, ornaments, and examinable routines are foregrounded, while sustained discussions of sentiment and *pathos* recede. Under conservatoire standardization and the urtext ideal, correctness is too easily equated with fidelity, so the expressive principles in C.P.E. Bach, Türk, Hummel, and Montgeroult are treated as peripheral gloss rather than as central aims. The result is arguably a mechanical caricature: the sources seem to teach procedure alone, when their best pages insist that technique serves beauty and taste. This study again proposes a corrective reading that restores the intended hierarchy and fills in the gaps with insights from the rhetorical discipline itself. Rule-governed drills are means to inner-outer coupling; expressive, rhetorical ends are the goal. In an eighteenth-century framework, the performer is expected to work between and through the external “constraints:” sensibility, fancy, and individual character flexibly interpose themselves at every pass, so that the rhetoric of performance remains both faithful to the notation and unmistakably enlivened from within. This gives the performer a creative agency that is recognizably “of the style” without collapsing into mere external mimicry. In the following chapter, this notion will be read in dialogue with historical theories of interpretation in music.

¹¹ See p. 26.

6. Sympathetic Interpretation

This chapter focuses more specifically on the notion of interpretation through eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century theories of how performers should understand and render a work so as to move others. Interpretation, in this sense, arises when the performer is not the original creator—when a musician plays a composition written by someone else, or an actor embodies a role conceived by a playwright. Many figures of the period—Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, C.P.E. Bach, Hummel, among others—were both composers and performers, often premiering their own works. In such cases, the path from invention to delivery remained continuous. By contrast, an interpreter, such as the modern HIP performer playing Beethoven, or an actor today performing Goethe, re-enters that path midway and “takes over” a process that began in another person’s mind. This is precisely the space where a period notion of “sympathetic interpretation” becomes necessary.

Sympathetic interpretation, as it will be termed in this study, is the art of reanimating the ideas “baked” into a written text, or musical score. It asks how a performer, encountering a score that contains only traces of another’s sensibility, can rekindle feeling in embodied delivery, restore coupling between inner feeling and the external features found in the written text that are transformed into outward sign, and carry the work forward to the audience. The rest of this chapter will examine how eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers theorized that task: how they imagined the performer reading, entering into, and “completing” a work composed by someone else, using the faculties of genius—sensibility, imagination, and taste—to bridge the gap between a fixed text written by a (sometimes) dead or absent composer and a living, moving performance. Such principles, as this chapter will also argue, could become a part of the modern HIP process, as they introduce new notions of “fidelity” that are historical in nature.

6.1 The Sentimental Composer

For various eighteenth-century writers, the most preferred way of composing is an inside-out process: invention begins in sentiment, and the resulting work is essentially a record of inner feeling unfolding as a sequence of outward expressions. Quintilian’s advice that “where we wish to give an impression of reality, let us assimilate ourselves to the emotions of those who really suffer; let our speech spring from the very attitude that we want to produce in the judge”¹ assumes that authentic rhetoric starts from genuinely felt emotion, however much it is later transformed through the canons of rhetoric. Johann Mattheson likewise insists that a composer who writes about “love” must draw on personal experience, past or present; without genuine acquaintance with, or deep sympathy for, such an elevated passion, the attempt should be avoided.² Johann Georg Sulzer and Johann Philipp Kirnberger recommend that, once the character of a piece is decided, the composer should enter the corresponding emotional state by

¹ Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 6.2.28.

² Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part I, ch. 3, §62; trans. Ernest C. Harris, p. 105.

imagining a situation that naturally embodies it, and only then begin to write.³ In *Tonkunst* (1777), Carl Ludwig Junker expresses a similar idea, advising composers to prepare themselves emotionally by reading and declaiming literature with analogous affects to what they seek to express:

He [the composer] considers what genre of music he will now tackle, what emotion he wants to evoke; he first puts himself in this emotion, imagines, in his first fantasy, through mental consciousness, the man who feels this passion, with all the movements as he saw him, and then determines the character of his piece [...] Shortly before [beginning to compose], he searches for the specific passion he wants to evoke in writings, especially in those where its entire business is described—in dramatic works. He recites aloud the tragedy that must contain the two main passions, love and anger, for him; he declaims, he combines action with it in order to feel his way deeper into the situation of his hero; he surrenders himself to every impression and then begins to work with the fullest atmosphere of his soul.⁴

Junker suggests that the composer first considers the musical genre and the feeling he wants to evoke, immersing himself in that sentiment via imagination. Before composing, the composer should seek out this passion in written works—especially dramatic texts. By declaiming aloud and acting out the passions, the composer further submits to the sentiment via a feedback loop akin to Aaron Hill’s “Mazy Round,”⁵ fostering identification with the emotional situation. Once the composer begins composing, he/she possesses a heightened, fully engaged inner feeling that, presumably, will be imprinted in the score.

Ludwig van Beethoven also allegedly professed to compose with an inside-out process. According to his pupil Carl Czerny, Beethoven spurned the notion of writing music for acclaim. Instead, his impulse to compose was driven by a desire to express strong inner feelings: “I never thought of writing for fame or honor. What is in my heart must come out, and that is why I write.”⁶ Such a statement would imply that Beethoven’s musical works are sentimental impressions.

In all these accounts, the ideal sentimental music is not built from the outside in, by manipulating forms, tropes, schemata, or *topoi* in a disinterested way (with little affective involvement).

³ Sulzer, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition*, p. 111.

⁴ Er überlegt, welche Gattung von Musik er nun behandle, welche Empfindung er herfürbringen wolle; er setzt sich selbst zuerst in diese Empfindung hinein, denkt sich bey der ersten Fantasie, durchs mentale Bewusstseyn, den Mann dieser eigenschaft, mit allen Bewegungen, wie er ihn sah, und bestimmt denn, den Character seines Stücks [...] Kurz zuvor sucht er die festgesetzte Leidenschaft, die er erregen will, in Schriften auf, und besonders in solchen, wo ihre ganze Geschichte geschildert ist;—in dramatischen Werken. Er ließt das Trauerspiel, das die zwey Hauptleidenschaften, Liebe und Zorn, für ihn enthalten muß, laut; er declamirt, er verbindet Action damit, um sich tiefer in die Situation seines Helden hinein zu ühlen; er überläßt sich jedem Eindruck, und fängt denn an mit der völligten Stimmung seiner Seele zu arbeiten. Carl Ludwig Junker, *Tonkunst* (Bern, 1777), pp. 27–9,

⁵ See p. 118.

⁶ ich habe nie daran gedacht, wegen Ruhm und Ehre zu schreiben. Was in meinem Herzen ist, muß heraus, und deswegen schreibe ich. Carl Czerny, *Erinnerungen aus meinem Leben: mit Werkverzeichnis* (ca. 1860), ed. Walter Kolneder, 1st edition (Baden-Baden: Verlag Valentin Koerner, 1968), p. 47.

Rather, it is conceived from within, inside-out, as outward manifestation of inwardly inhabited sentiment. This does not mean that an exclusively outside-in method is impossible. Many eighteenth-century theorists clearly recognize that a composer can combine patterns, vary themes, or follow formal recipes in a relatively detached manner. But their repeated insistence on emotional preparation signals a value judgment: the most compelling, natural “sentimental” music is understood to begin with sentiments, such that inner-outer coupling can be ensured. For composer-performers, this ideal could be realized with particular immediacy. In their case, the rhetorical process runs continuously from invention, stamped by inner feeling and organized by judgment and taste, straight into delivery at the instrument. In improvised genres such as preludes, fantasias, variations, or extempore cadenzas, the entire arc—from first conception to audible expression—takes place in real time before listeners; the audience witnesses the composer’s living sensibility as it generates, shapes, and projects affect in a single, uninterrupted circuit.

However, from the perspective of the aesthetics of sensibility and eighteenth-century theories of language and expression (see Chapter 3.2), the situation changes the moment sentimental inventions are fixed in notation. When a composer who also performs starts to write a score, that inside-out process is “stopped” at the level of outward sign. In Jean Jacques Rousseau’s terms, just as written language inevitably silences many qualities of “natural” passionate expression, musical notation cannot capture all the features of the composer’s original impression. What is preserved is an external trace: pitches, rhythms, dynamics, articulations, formal outlines, etc. in notes and signs. As Rousseau might argue, these signs are an incomplete impression of expression; they are a skeleton of passionate communicate. However, these traces are arguably not neutral. Through the commonplaces from which they were born, they bear the imprint of the original coupling between inner feeling and outer expression: all residues of earlier acts of sensibility that occurred within long dead bodies. Once written, however, the score is “dead matter”: only the outward signs remain, separated from the inner excitation that first produced them. This study argues based on such accounts, that the task of interpretation is to re-activate that coupling. Gilbert Austin had advised the orator, when delivering, to use their imagination to re-excite the sentiments of every idea expressed, especially those that proceed from a given text, such that the audience will witness the re-coupling of new inner feeling to outer sign in the moment of performance.⁷ Consequently, in musical interpretation, this would mean letting the performer’s own sensibility and imagination seize upon these external marks and, in Alexander Gerard’s sense, run them through the same chain of faculties, so that what began as another’s sentiment can once again become a living, moving experience in performance.

⁷ See Chapter 4.2.1.

6.2 Sympathetic Interpretation in Period Writings

Eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers generally agree on one basic premise: an interpretation ought, in some measure, to be faithful to the composer's ideas. For example, in his *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), Avison proposes that the performer must “do a Composition justice, by playing it in a Taste and Style so exactly corresponding with the Intention of the Composer, as to preserve and illustrate all the Beauties of his Work.”⁸ At first glance this seems straightforward: the performer's role is to preserve and clarify what is already present in the notation. On the other hand, as the culture of sensibility and sympathetic imagination inform, “doing justice” to a work means something more complex than literal compliance. Interpretation is conceived as a co-creative act—one that involves the performer's sensibility, imagination, and taste responding actively to the composer's text.

In *Becoming Beethoven* (2023), artistic researcher Maria Bania succinctly captures this shift by arguing that performance consists “not only [of] practices, such as playing techniques and styles, but also thoughts, ideas, and feelings.” While it may not be possible to exactly “recreate the same thoughts and mindsets” of the past, it is possible to “use documented metaphors and ideas in order to approach more closely to and understand more deeply the music aesthetics of the period.”⁹ In sympathetic interpretation, this study will also argue that the performer is not merely reproducing external features, but attempting to enter into, and resonate with, the inner world the work presupposes.

Within a sentimental and early Romantic mindset, this was often described as entering the mind or spirit of the composer. Rousseau advises singers that it “is not enough to read the music exactly as written; one must understand all of the composer's ideas, feel and convey the fire of the expression.”¹⁰ The score is taken as a necessary starting point, but it is not self-sufficient: the performer must imaginatively reconstruct the inner feeling behind the notes, allowing those ideas to sympathetically kindle their own sensibility. In the 1770s–80s, Christian Friedrich Daniel Schubart radicalises this notion when describing how to play a sonata by J. S. Bach. The performer, he writes, must become so absorbed in Bach's spirit that their own individuality “withers away” into the Bachian idiom. All mechanical skills are presupposed; what distinguishes the true soloist is “creative power,” the ability to transform written notes into “sparks” and to command the “spirit to burn in all ten fingers.”¹¹ Here interpretation is neither mere fidelity nor self-display: it is a total, embodied identification with the composer's *Geist*,

⁸ Avison, *Essay on Musical Expression*, p. 90.

⁹ Bania, *Becoming Beethoven*, p. 14.

¹⁰ C'est peu de lire la Musique exactement sur la Note; il faut entrer dans toutes les idées du Compositeur, sentir et rendre le feu de l'expression. Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique* (Paris: 1768), p. 209.

¹¹ Will ich eine *Sonate* von Bach vortragen, so muss ich mich so ganz in den Geist dieses grossen Mannes versenken, dass meine Ichheit wegschwindet, und Bachisches Idiom wird. Alle mechanischen Fertigkeiten: Ohr, geflügelte Faust, Fingersatz, Tactfestigkeit, Verständniss des Instruments, Lesekunst, und dergleichen weggerechnet; so wage sich nur kein Solospieler auf den Schauplatz, wenn er nicht Schöpferkraft. besitzt; wenn er nicht die Noten in eben so viel Feuerflocken zu verwandeln weiss; wenn er nicht die begleitenden Stimmen um ihn, wie die Zuhörer versteinern kann, und — ach, wenn er unfähig ist, dem Geists zu gebiethen in allen zehn Fingern zu brennen. Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, p. 295; trans. Ted Alan Du Bois, p. 350.

in which technique, imagination, and affect fuse. Schubart does not reject prescription or mechanical skill, but insists it is assumed, a foundation from which something far greater emerges: the creative fire, or the ability to transform written notes into living affect to captivate the listener. Once technique is automatic, the imagination can then focus on resonating with the “spirit” of the composer through the sentiments.

Furthermore, Ernst Theodor Amadeus (E.T.A.) Hoffmann suggested that interpreters of Beethoven’s piano works should try to enter Beethoven’s mind and understand Beethoven’s personality:

As far as difficulty is concerned, to the proper and adequate performance of Beethoven’s compositions thus belongs nothing less than that one understands him, that one penetrates deeply into his essence, that in the consciousness of one’s own blessings one boldly dares to enter the realm of those magical things that his powerful spell invokes [...] The true artist lives only in the work that he has understood as the composer meant it and that he then performs. He is above putting his own personality forward in any way, and all his endeavours are directed toward a single end—that all the wonderful, enchanting pictures and apparitions that the composer has sealed into his work with magic power may be called into active life, shining in a thousand colours, and that they may surround mankind in luminous sparkling circles and, enkindling its imagination, its innermost soul, may bear it in rapid flight into the faraway spirit realm of sound.¹²

Hoffmann’s account of playing Beethoven takes this sympathetic model to an explicitly poetic extreme. To perform Beethoven “properly and adequately” requires that one “understands him,” “penetrates deeply into his essence,” and dares to enter the “magical realm” his music invokes. The score is here imagined as a sealed repository of inner visions: an artefact in which another’s imagination has been fixed. The performer’s task is to open and reanimate this sealed world so that it again surrounds listeners in “luminous sparkling circles” and carries their imagination into the “spirit realm of sound.”

Hoffmann’s language aligns closely with Adam Smith’s theory of sympathetic imagination.¹³ For Smith, sympathy involves imaginatively “becoming in some measure the same person” as another, seeing with their eyes and feeling with their feelings. Applied to performance, sympathetic

¹² Was nun die Schwierigkeit betrifft, so gehört zum richtigen, bequemen Vortragen B.scher Composition nichts geringeres, als dass man ihn begreife, dass man tief in sein Wesen eindringe, dass man im Bewusstseyn eigner Weihe es kühn wage, in den Kreis der magischen Erscheinungen zu treten, die sein mächtiger Zauber hervorruft...Der ächte Künstler lebt nur in dem Werke, das er in dem Sinne des Meisters aufgefaßt hat und nun vorträgt. Er verschmäh’t es, auf irgend eine Weise seine Persönlichkeit geltend zu machen, und all sein Dichten und Trachten geht nur dahin, alle die herrlichen, holdseligen Bilder und Erscheinungen, die der Meister mit magischer Gewalt in sein Werk verschloß, tausendfarbig glänzend ins rege Leben zu rufen, daß sie den Menschen in lichten, funkelnden Kreisen umfängen, und seine Phantasie, sein innerstes Gemüth entzündend, ihn raschen Fluges in das ferne Geisterreich der Töne tragen.” Hoffmann, “Recension Deux Trios pour Pianoforte, Violon et Violoncelle,” *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* (1813, sp. 153–4). trans. Tilman Skowroneck and O. Strunk, *Source Readings in Music History*, 5., *The Romantic Era*, rev. ed., L. Treitler (New York: 1952), pp. 40–1.

¹³ See Chapter 2.1.

interpretation asks the musician to take the score as a clue to the composer's inner world and, through imagination and sensibility, to inhabit that world sufficiently to let it speak again. In this view, the interpretation begins coupling from the outside-in: allowing the score's external features to inspire an inner feeling in the performer. The performer then proceeds to couple this inside-out once more in delivery to intersubjectively share this inner world with an audience. In this sense, the interpreter is not a neutral executor but a sympathetic agent, bridging the gap between a historical subjectivity and the present audience.

Writers such as Hoffmann and Schubart can sound as though they demand the erasure of the performer's personality when their eloquent bodies are somehow "possessed" by the spirit of a J.S. Bach, or a Beethoven. Yet other voices allow room for a measured personal imprint within fidelity. The German composer, horn player, and Paris Conservatoire professor Heinrich Domnich, wrote in 1808:

Without removing the original character of a piece, [expression] knows to leave its mark on it; and by expression, the composer's thought somehow becomes a creation of the performer. This is thus how expression produces its most lively effects; this is how it lifts itself up to the sublime.¹⁴

For Domnich, a performer can leave their "mark" on a piece "without removing the original character." Hence, expression reaches its most vivid and even sublime effects when the performer, without distorting the work's fundamental character, impresses something of their own sensibility upon it. This performer is encouraged to, as Bania puts it, "render this personal imprint," and hence requires a degree of flexibility and interpretative freedom.¹⁵ Domnich's observation builds upon the approach Hoffmann describes. If, as Hoffmann argues, the ideal interpreter enters into the imaginative world of the composer, then Domnich describes what happens in that moment of imaginative inhabitation: the performer does not merely reproduce the composer's inner feeling but co-creates it anew through expressive interpretation. As Bania observed, "through this unification, the performer became the music's co-creator, or real-time creator, expressing both the music and her- or himself with an expanded artistic self and expressive power."¹⁶

Viewed in this context, sympathetic interpretation is neither text-literalistic obedience nor arbitrary self-assertion. It assumes that the composer's inventions—originally born of an inside-out process of sentiment, imagination, and taste—have been "baked" into the external form of the score, where, as Rousseau would say, some part of their living expressivity has been inevitably silenced. The

¹⁴ Sans effacer le caractère originel d'un morceau, elle sait lui donner son empreinte; et par elle, la pensée du compositeur devient en quelque sorte une création de l'exécutant. C'est alors que l'expression produit ses plus énergiques effets; c'est alors qu'elle s'élève jusqu'au sublime. Heinrich Domnich, *Méthode de Premier et de Second Cor* (Paris: 1808), 93 ; trans. Tilman Skowronek in Bania, *Becoming Beethoven*, p. 67.

¹⁵ Bania, *Becoming Beethoven*, p. 49.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

interpreter's task then is to pick up the process where it was interrupted: to let the notated signs awaken fresh inner feeling, to couple that movement to outward expression, and to do so in a way that remains recognisably faithful to the work's character. In that sense, fidelity and freedom are not opposed. Fidelity consists precisely in allowing one's own faculties of sensibility, imagination, and taste to be guided by the work's design, so that the composer's "sealed" ideas become once more a living, shared experience in performance.

6.3 Fidelity: Interpreting "Correctly"

Taking the view of sympathetic interpretation, recognizing a composer's inner world through their artifacts is of primary importance. While on occasion, some composers like Georg Joseph Vogler have provided detailed commentaries that explicitly explain the narrative ideas, figures, and sentiments expressed in a work,¹⁷ most instrumental works rarely include detailed explanations of character or affect. As a result, they must be interpreted by a performer, who has to reconstruct a sentimental narrative from what is essentially a network of external signs.

Nevertheless, the interpreter, which also includes the modern performer, is not without resources. Recall that eighteenth-century theorists like Mattheson in his *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), Schubart in his *Ideen* (written 1770s-80s, published 1806), or Forkel in the second part of his *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1801), enumerated musical *topoi* and figures as commonplaces of the language of sentiments: characteristic tonalities, intervals, tempi, metres, textures, and turns of phrase that signal lament, agitation, nobility, pastoral calm, and so on.¹⁸ Many of these are explicitly marked by the composer—through tempo and character indications, dynamic profiles, articulation, or registral layout. Others are implied by genre (e.g. sonata, march, aria, fantasia) or style (e.g. theatrical, dance, sacred), which carry conventional expectations of decorum. From a sentimental perspective, these features are not mere stylistic labels; they are the preserved outward half of an original coupling, in which a composer's inner sentiments once found specific musical shapes.

Interpreting these signs, however, would prove challenging for modern performers separated from that world by several centuries. The risk is either to treat them as a thin semiotic code—matching each *topos* with a stock label—or to ignore them in favour of generic, "intuitive" expression. Yet writers of the period were deeply concerned with identifying the appropriate affective content of a work. According to Koch in instructions to the prospective composer in his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1782):

the difficulty of having an accurate presentation of his works is peculiar to the composer and perhaps unique in the fine arts. [...] With the work of the composer, this must occur

¹⁷ See „Zergliederung der Ouverture zur. Tragödie: Hamlet“, Georg Joseph Vogler, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule*, Bd. 1, pp. 313–37.

¹⁸ On various musical *topoi*, see Appendix on p. 334.

indirectly as he must leave his work to the discretion of the performers. A single one [person] can destroy the spirit of the piece necessary for the faithful presentation of the work, be it from lack of taste [*Geschmack*], from incorrect interpretation of this or that idea, at times, I daresay, also from malice.¹⁹

This implies that the onus is on the composer to leave performers with enough instructions to indicate *telos*. These instructions could be comprehensible if an interpreter is familiar with the taxonomies of musical *topoi* and rhetorical figures of the period. Despite this, some works may still prove enigmatic. Some writers criticized such ambiguity in musical works. Sulzer ascribed these to incompetence in his *Allgemeine Theorie* (1771–74), observing that one “sees all too often works whose author had no idea what he was trying to do.”²⁰ Certainly, the lack of explicit direction in a musical score was and remains a problem for both interpreters in the eighteenth century and today.

Arguably, a performer always has the option to refrain from performing pieces they find incomprehensible. Regardless, the flexible and inherently incomplete nature of musical notation becomes not a limitation, but an invitation to creative participation. In the view of sympathetic interpretation, the score is not a finished work, but a recipe: a scaffold or rhetorical outline that presupposes a coupling between inner feeling and outward sign. It calls upon the co-creativity of performers—their sentimental imagination, sensibility, and taste—to complete the work in embodied delivery. In this context, external “prescription” (detailed dynamics, articulations, tempos, pedal markings, and so on) would not simply constrain freedom but indicates a range of preferred solutions within which individual realization may unfold. Composer and performer alike must negotiate a balance between pre-scripting expression and leaving sufficient space for imaginative, real-time input, so that the outward configuration of signs remains flexible enough to be animated by living sentiment.

To summarize, within the framework of sympathetic interpretation, a process can be envisioned. A composer first experiences or imaginatively summons an inner feeling, which, through sensibility, becomes vividly present in the body. Guided by taste, he/she then searches for, tests, and stabilizes a configuration of outward musical signs that paint that inward state in the manner of Engel’s *musikalisches Malerey*.²¹ When composer and performer coincide, these external signs may be fixed in notation as a kind of externalized memory-trace of the original sentiment. Later, when reading or performing his/her own work, the artist draws on recollection to rekindle, as far as possible, the affective state that accompanied composition; the written marks function as cues by which the earlier configuration of feeling and sign is re-coupled in real time. In signal-processing terms, the notated work may be thought of as a “source signal,” while the artist’s own sensibility and character function as a

¹⁹ Koch, *Aesthetics and the Art of Musical Composition in the German Enlightenment*, p. 149.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²¹ See p. 89.

shaping filter; performance then becomes a controlled convolution of the notated design with this personal imprint, colouring and amplifying the original without wholly distorting its identity.

For the interpreter of another's score, the situation is necessarily more complex. The performer receives only the external features in a notated score, while the originating feeling in the composer has been abstracted away. Interpretation thus becomes an act of imaginative reconstruction and re-coupling: the performer infers what kinds of sentiments such a configuration was intended to embody, allows those reconstructed affects to inhabit his/her own body and delivery, and then he/she couples them to sound and gesture. This process unfolds within a co-creative network in which composer, interpreter, and audience are sympathetically linked. The impulse of *telos* is received from the work itself. But a performance that unfolds in real-time is contingent on *kairos*. Here, stimuli do not flow in one direction only, (one direction would imply from score to performer to listener.) Rather, the audience's visible and audible responses—tension, stillness, restlessness, heightened attention—feed back into the performer's imagination, sensibility, and taste as a sort of “Mazy Round,” modulating timing, emphasis, and intensity. The performance event thus resembles a dynamic system with multiple inputs and outputs: the notated work provides a relatively stable source, the performer's individual character shapes this without overly distorting it, and the audience's responses constitute real-time feedback that further refines the ongoing signal convolution. When this system functions well, the score ceases to operate as a mere technical script and becomes a vehicle of shared sentiment, in which the performer's “fire” ignites sympathetic imagination in listeners, who in turn participate in co-creating the expressive outcome.

6.4 Notational Specificity versus Imagination, Intuition, and Instinct

The later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed a marked increase in notational specificity, as composers introduced ever more prescriptive markings to secure what they took to be more reliable transmission of their ideas. On one level, this development reflects the well-documented rise in the composer's cultural status and the emerging Romantic valorization of individual genius. Yet it also seems antithetical to the period's broader discourse that exalted nature, instinct, and sensibility over artifice and formalism.

In the aesthetics of sensibility, “art” was not meant to suppress nature but to perfect and clarify it, bringing its latent expressive potential to light without becoming rigid or obtrusive. The highest ideal of the Sublime depends precisely on this balance: where crafted form and “natural” vehemence of passion are so intimately fused that artifice disappears from view. From this perspective, excessive prescription risks foregrounding the machinery of art at the expense of the natural force of the passions and threatens to sever the coupling between inner feeling and outward sign in favour of technical or mechanical accuracy. In this view, overly-detailed or excessively prescriptive notation can arguably harden what ought to remain a living process in which performers retain enough imaginative flexibility

and expressive agency to respond in real time both to their own sentiments and to the subtle feedback of the audience. Sympathetic interpretation occupies the ambivalent middle ground opened by this tension. The performer must internalize the composer's intentions while re-naturalizing the written text, making it sound, as Gilbert Austin advised, as though it arises spontaneously from feeling rather than from mere obedience to a script.²² In this sense, sympathetic interpretation is neither a surrender to unregulated spontaneity nor a passive execution of prescriptions, but a co-creative practice rooted in corporeal eloquence and questions of taste.

Rousseau is exemplary in articulating this concern with over-specification. He repeatedly warns that overly complex notation can obstruct the musician's mind and impede instinctual expression that arises from sensibility. As Jacqueline Waebber underscores, "Rousseau saw in the arbitrary signs used in traditional musical notation an obstacle between the music and the performer, and he proposed a new notational system designed to suppress the use of signs that hindered unmediated access to the music."²³ His experimental system of the 1740s, though ingenious, did not gain wide currency; nonetheless, the underlying critique persists in his *Encyclopédie* articles²⁴ and in the *Dictionnaire de musique* (1768),²⁵ where he argues that European staff notation had become excessively complex, artificial, and socially exclusive, and thus increasingly detached from music's original "natural" expressive and communicative function. Viewed in the context of mid-eighteenth-century "neo-classical" aesthetic reforms, Rousseau advocates stripping away superfluous ornament, dense accompaniments, and rigid prescriptive detail in vocal music, so that the singer's cognitive and affective capacity is not consumed by decoding notation but is freed for imaginative intuition. From the perspective developed in the previous section, such simplification aims to preserve the conditions for a fruitful intermingling between the notated ideas and the performer's own sensibility and character: notation provides a clear, intelligible input, while leaving sufficient openness for the operations of the performer's own genius, in Gerard's terms.

More practical examples of this ambivalence can be found in the performer's treatises of the period. For example, C.P.E. Bach cautioned strongly against overloading music with dynamic marks. In the chapter on delivery [*Von Vortrage*] in his *Versuch* (1753, 1st edition), he demonstrates how to shape a phrase with forte and piano on dissonant and consonant chords respectively. He then pointedly admits that he constantly adds *f* and *p* in his examples simply for illustrative purposes, but the overuse of such notations is objectionable because it confuses the performer and becomes mechanical.²⁶ This

²² See p. 108.

²³ Waebber, "Jean-Jacques Rousseau's 'Unité de Mélodie'", p. 84.

²⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Musique." *Encyclopédie*, vol. 10, pp. 898–902.

²⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de musique*. In *Œuvres complètes de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, vol. 9, éd. Du Peyrou & Moulton, J. M. Gallanar (éd.), Genève, 1780–1789. Rousseau Online, 7 July 2025, <https://www.rousseauonline.ch/Text/volume-9-dictionnaire-de-musique.php>.

²⁶ Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 1st edition, Part I, p. 130 (§29).

remark reveals Bach's view: expressive markings are useful, but too many notational instructions are not helpful. As was already argued earlier in this study, Bach prized a performer's sensitive *Empfindung* (feeling) above mechanical obedience. Earlier in this chapter, Bach had already stated that performing "requires a freedom that excludes anything slavish or mechanical" — one should "play from the soul, not like a trained bird."²⁷ Similarly, in his *Versuch* (1756), Leopold Mozart insisted that any written markings must be observed exactly as a baseline, with feeling and entering the affect expressed additional mandates.²⁸ Yet he also acknowledged that composers often did not write every ornament. The performer was expected to supply tasteful ornaments and articulation that contributed to the affect where none were indicated.²⁹ Here, Leopold Mozart teaches that a skilled performer, by understanding the piece, could add expressive devices appropriately, thereby collaborating with the composer's intent rather than being confined by sparse notation, or assuming that a lack of notation translates to an unadorned simple execution. Hence, the absence of written detail in many cases should not be read as a prohibition, but as an invitation for the performer to supply tasteful additions that serve the affect.

This line of thinking —that notation should guide expression but not constrain it — continued into the nineteenth century and aligns closely with the sympathetic interpretive concept. Koch in his *Musikalisches Lexicon* (1802) wrote that a musical score, especially of earlier eras, often functioned as an incomplete text that the performer must complete through stylistic insight:

This is not the case with the works of the composer, whose finished score, without the aid of performance, contains nothing more than a series of hieroglyphics [...] For ordinary and general enjoyment, such a finished work of art is still dead, and must first be interpreted by the ear through the living representation of its symbols.³⁰

He and others still valued the performer as an active co-interpreter. At the same time, there was growing acceptance that composers might legitimately prescribe more of the interpretation. The violinist and pedagogue Pierre Baillot writes in his *L'art du violon* (1834):

This tendency toward dramatic style gave rise to the need to multiply signs and note all inflections in order to achieve greater accuracy in accordance with the composer's intentions. This is what modern authors have done, and it is what makes music written before this period much more difficult to perform and translate accurately. [...] The abundance of symbols is beneficial to music in that it can prevent many misunderstandings and serve as a guide for

²⁷ Es gehört hiezu eine Freyheit, die alles slavische und maschinenmäßige ausschliesst. Aus der Seele muß man spielen, und nicht wie ein abgerichteter Vogel. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen*, 1st edition, Part I, p. 119 (§7).

²⁸ Leopold Mozart, *Gründliche Violinschule* (Augsburg: Lotter, 1787), Kapitel 12, "Das zwölfte Hauptstück" §3.

²⁹ Ibid., Kapitel 9, "Das neunte Hauptstück" §16–17 (pp. 207–210), <https://www.koelnklavier.de/quellen/moz-le/kap09.html>.

³⁰ nicht so bey den Werken des Tonsetzers, dessen vollendete Partitur ohne Beyhülfe des Vortrags gleichsam nur noch eine Schrift von Hieroglyphen enthält [...] Für den gewöhnlichen und allgemeinen Genuß ist ein solches vollendetes Kunstwerk noch tod, und muß erst durch lebendige Darstellung seiner Zeichen [...] dem Empfindungsvermögen durchs Ohr verdolmetschet werden. Heinrich Christoph Koch, "Ausführung", *Musikalisches Lexikon...* (Frankfurt am Main: August Hermann d. J., 1802), col. 187–193.

those who cannot do without them, but it could ultimately stifle the genius of performance, which takes pleasure above all in guessing and creating in its own way³¹

Baillot's notion reflects this continuing line of thought. Moreover, Baillot speaks to the danger of reducing performance to mechanical fidelity. In an overly prescribed interpretive environment—certainly also in one that may even lean towards modern text-literalism—there is little room for the performer's intuitive imaginative engagement with the composer's inner world. The imaginative leap, inhabiting the sequence of sentiments embedded in the score, is curtailed by the weight of external directives. In such a view, the performer is no longer a co-creator, but a technician of fixed details.

Arguably, various un-notated stylistic expressive devices—ornament, agogic inflection, rhythmic displacement (*inégalité*), dislocation, tempo rubato, intuitive dynamic shading and inflecting—are precisely the kinds of resources that an engaged imagination could bring to a score in sympathetic interpretation. In the aesthetics of sensibility, they would ideally be activated in response to *telos* and *kairos* and could be guided by sentiment and sympathetic imagination. In this way, they arguably become outward manifestations of that immediate inward feeling. For example, agogics and rubato can be considered as an elastic shaping of time that echoes emphatic outbursts, swells, and ebbs in a passionate inner life. Crucially, such deviations draw their force from emotional inertia:³² they take their weight and plausibility from the underlying passion that propels them, rather than from arbitrary whim. When the performer's affective state is genuinely mobilized, these temporal inflections acquire continuity and “mass,” and cease to appear as mere technical distortion.

Historical performance practice sources describe such practices. The kinds of rhythmic modifications that Sandra Rosenblum terms “agogic” and “structural” rubato are well documented in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century performance practice discourse, with a notable degree of continuity in treatises by Quantz, C. P. E. Bach, Leopold and W. A. Mozart, Türk, Hummel, Czerny, and others, who all allow for flexible timing as a natural outgrowth of sincere expression rather than a notational aberration.³³ For example, C.P.E. Bach describes “agogic” rubato in the 1787 edition of his *Versuch*:

This is skilfully achieved by a gradual, gentle acceleration in each passage, which is then alternated with a sleepy pause in the rhythm. When playing with emotion, one must be

³¹ De cette tendance au style dramatique devait naître la nécessité de multiplier les signes et de noter toutes les inflexions pour frapper plus juste au gré du Compositeur. C'est ce que les Auteurs modernes ont fait, et c'est ce qui rend la musique mise ou jour avant cette époque beaucoup plus difficile à exécuter et à bien traduire [...] L'abondance des signes est favorable à la musique en ce qu'elle peut empêcher bien des contre sens et servir de guide à ceux qui ne sauraient s'en passer, mais elle pourrait finir par éteindre le génie d'exécution qui se plaint surtout à deviner, à créer à sa manière. Pierre Baillot, *L'art du Violon, Nouvelle Méthode* (Paris: Depot Central de Musique, n.d. [1834], Plate 228.Bis.), p. 162.

³² See Chapter 4.2.2.

³³ For further reading, see Sandra Rosenblum, “The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries”, *Performance Practice Review* 7/ 1/ 3 (1994), DOI: 10.5642/perfpr.199407.01.03.

careful not to pause too often or too much, and ultimately not to slow down the entire tempo. Emotion can easily lead to this. Regardless of these beauties, one must maintain the exact same tempo at the end of a piece as at the beginning. [...] If a piece contains ideas in a major key that are repeated in a minor key, this repetition may also be played slightly slower for the sake of affect. At the beginning of a fermata that expresses weariness, tenderness or sadness, it is customary to pause the beat slightly. Tempo rubato also belongs here. In indicating this, the figures sometimes have more notes and sometimes fewer than the division of the beat allows. In this way, one can, so to speak, extend part of the bar, a whole bar, or even several bars. The most difficult and important thing is this: that all notes of equal value must be played strictly equally. If the performance is such that one hand seems to play against the beat, while the other strikes all parts of the beat with the utmost precision, then one has done what one should have done. Only very rarely do the voices strike at the same time. If the tempo rubato ends with a cut, something of the latter can be drawn into the tempo rubato, but the end of it must be there at the same time as the basic voice, as one must always end in this way with this tempo. Slow notes, flattering and sad thoughts are then the most skilful. Dissonant harmonies are more suitable for this than consonant phrases. The correct execution of this tempo requires a great deal of judgement and, in particular, a great deal of feeling. Those who possess both will find it easy to arrange their performance with complete freedom, without the slightest constraint, and would be able to omit any thoughts if necessary. This would be fine for practice, but nothing more. On the other hand, no matter how hard one tries, nothing proper can be achieved without sufficient feeling. As soon as one slavishly binds one's upper voice to the beat, this tempo loses its essence, because all the other voices must be performed strictly according to the beat.³⁴

³⁴ dieser wird geschickt durch ein allmähliges gelindes Eilen bey jeder Uebersetzung ausgeföhret, welches kurz drauf sehr wohl mit einem schläfrigen Anhalten im Tacte abwechselt. Man hüte sich bey dem affectuösen Spielen, daß man nicht zu oft, nicht gar zu sehr anhalte, und endlich auch nicht das ganze Tempo hierdurch schleppend mache. Der Affect verführt hiezu gar leicht. Man muß ohngeacht dieser Schönheiten die genaueste Gleichheit der Zeit-Maaße beym Ende eines Stückes beybehalten, wie sie beym Anfange war. [...] Wenn in einem Stücke aus einer harten Ton-Art Gedanken vorkommen, welche in einer weichen Ton-Art wiederholt werden: so kann diese Wiederholung ebenfalls etwas wenigens langsamer geschehen des Affects wegen. Beym Eingange in eine Fermate, welche eine Mattigkeit, Zärtlichkeit oder Traurigkeit ausdrückt, pflegt man auch in etwas den Tact anzuhalten. Hierher gehört auch das Tempo rubato. In der Andeutung desselben haben die Figuren bald mehrere, bald wenigere Noten, als die Eintheilung des Tactes erlaubt. Man kann dadurch einen Theil des Tactes, einen ganzen, auch mehrere Tacte, so zu sagen, verziehen. Das Schwereste und Hauptsächlichste ist dieses: daß alle Noten von gleicher Geltung aufs strengste gleich vorgetragen werden müssen. Wenn die Ausführung so ist, daß man mit der einen Hand wider den Tact zu spielen scheint, indem die andere aufs pünctlichste alle Tacttheile anschläget: so hat man gethan, was man hat thun sollen. Nur sehr selten kommen alsdenn die Stimmen zugleich im Anschlagen. Wenn sich das Tempo rubato mit einem Einschnitte endiget, so kann etwas von diesem letztern mit ins Tempo rubato gezogen werden, nur muß das Ende davon mit der Grund-Stimme zugleich da seyn, wie man überhaupt bey diesem Tempo auf solche Art endigen muß. Langsame Noten, schmeichelnde und traurige Gedanken sind alsdenn die geschicktesten. Dissonirende Harmonien schicken sich hierzu besser, als consonirende Sätze. Es gehört zur richtigen Ausführung dieses Tempo's viele Urtheils-Kraft und ganz besonders viel Empfindung. Wer beydeß hat, dem wird es nicht schwer fallen, mit aller Freyheit, die nicht den geringsten Zwang verträgt, seinen Vortrag einzurichten, und er würde, wenn es seyn müßte, alle Gedanken verziehen können. Zur Uebung giengte es an, aber weiter nicht. Hingegen wird bey aller Mühe, ohne hinlängliche Empfindung nichts rechtes ausgerichtet können werden. So bald man sich mit seiner Ober-Stimme slavisch an den Tact bindet, so verliert dieses Tempo sein Wesentliches, weil alle

Hence, according to Bach, “agogic” rubato is a deliberate, in-time distortion of a measure’s internal subdivisions—adding or subtracting notes within the beat. Bach always emphasizes rubato’s relation to feeling, as “nothing proper can be achieved without sufficient feeling.” He advises the player to avoid mechanically synchronizing their hands, suggesting instead that they respond to the underlying feeling of the pacing, which is what gives musical tempo its sentimental essence. However, Bach also reminds the player to not lose him/herself completely in feeling (as an overindulgence in emotion can leave them to excessively distorting the steadiness of tempo) but always remain regulated by taste.

On the other hand, structural rubato is a more general form of tempo flexibility that affects the entire tempo fabric, described by Thomas Busby’s *Complete Dictionary of Music* (1801) as an “expression applied to a time alternately accelerated and retarded for the purpose of enforcing the expression.”³⁵ Treatises of the period typically offer only isolated instances or prototype examples of agogic inflection and rubato, expressly leaving the full scope of their application to the performer’s “taste.” The point here, arguably, is not to supply a catalogue of effects to be randomly sprinkled over the music, but to give the musician tools for musical painting. In doing so, this invites a flexible toolset grounded in a living, affective logic.

The perspective of sympathetic interpretation underpins a critique of the methodology of certain modern HIP approaches that treat early recordings—piano rolls and early twentieth-century wax cylinders and discs—as stylistic templates to be copied and applied to eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century repertoire, all the while arguing that these practices were practiced even in this earlier period. Without addressing the question of the historicity of such an approach, studying these sources is certainly worthwhile: they can show how performers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries externalized sensibility, and how devices such as dislocation, rubato, chord spreading, and accentuation were marshalled toward an affective end. The problem arises when those devices are lifted out of their expressive context and redeployed in modern performance as isolated effects that are disconnected from *telos*, which often deals with *pathos*. Like the notated score, early recordings preserve an imprint of sensibility as it was embodied at a particular time, by a particular performer, under particular pressures of taste, audience, and occasion. To replicate these intuitive expressive devices arbitrarily—on a whim, or as a generalized “period manner,” without any conception of the passions from which they originally arose, is to substitute surface detail for rhetorical *telos*, and external markers of style for the inner feeling that gives those markers affectivity. These techniques are, in a sense, artifices: cultivated means of intensifying and clarifying natural signs of expression. Yet in the aesthetics of sensibility, they were arguably meant to function as outward traces of an inner movement, not decorative mannerisms applied for the sake of an affected “style.” The result would likely be caricature and, in the strict sense,

übrige Stimmen aufs strengste nach dem Tacte ausgeführt werden müssen. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre art das Clavier zu spielen*, 3rd edition, Part 1, pp. 99–100 (§28).

³⁵ Thomas Busby, “Tempo rubato”, *A Complete Dictionary of Music* (London: 1811), no page numbers.

mannerism. While often fanciful, expressive devices deployed in this manner are, when considered in light of the aesthetics of sensibility and the Sublime, liable to read as stilted or awkward, because they substitute artifice for nature. For these reasons, such a performance would have difficulty reaching the aims of the Bolevian Sublime. In this view, when expressive devices are copied without a sentimental aim and a sense of *telos*—they may be striking, even clever, but they remain external forms that signal “expression.” Therefore, in this perspective, searching for inspiration from early recordings could doubtlessly be a valuable source for HIP practitioners, but it is a resource which ought to be treated with care if the performer seeks to operate within the aesthetics of sensibility.

Part II: The Rhetorical Approach in Music

With the rhetorical framework based on the aesthetics of sensibility now established in Part I, Part II turns to its concrete application in music via rhetorical structural analysis and performance practice between 1740 and 1830. These next chapters pursue two aims at once. Firstly, they offer musicologists a historically situated account of how music could be understood and analyzed with rhetorical principles, and how these principles might have guided performers of the period. Secondly, they translate that account into a set of usable principles for contemporary HIP—better described here as historically inspired performance, in which these historical principles are used as prompts in practice rather than treated as fixed rules. Accordingly, when this section addresses “rhetorical performers,” the term refers to performers (both historically-situated or modern) who adopt the perspective and operate with the principles of the framework developed in Part I.

7. Disposition, Rhetorical Grammar and Structured Argumentation

Dispositio (disposition) refers to this structured arrangement of a discourse. As Cicero remarks, once the points of a case have been found, “the separate divisions of the whole case must be considered”: the orator must decide what to place first, what last, and how to connect the parts.¹ The point of such division is not merely compositional convenience. By breaking material into ordered sections, *dispositio* produces a map for delivery: it tells the orator where an argument begins, where it culminates, where it turns, and where it comes to rest. Eighteenth-century rhetorical theorists consistently link this structuring to composition and delivery. Syntax and grammar are not only rules of correctness; they shape how discourse can be parsed by an audience, and therefore how it must be spoken. Hence treatises by Johann Christoph Gottsched, Hugh Blair, or John Walker begin with grammar because it provides the basic building blocks—words, phrases, and their rules of combination—on which all higher eloquence rests. Walker’s *Rhetorical Grammar, or Course of Lectures in Elocution* (1785) makes this connection explicit: grammatical constructions are treated in terms of their rhetorical telos, and “mechanical” rules are introduced precisely to govern emphasis, pausing, and modulation in delivery. External rules of grammar thus become prescriptive for performance because they organize speech into units that can be clearly heard, understood, and emotionally followed.

Modern musicology has taken up this analogy on the compositional side. Mark Evan Bonds has shown how, in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, musical forms were understood as a kind of wordless rhetoric: form as the logical structuring of interconnected musical ideas into recognizable rhetorical patterns.² On the small scale, *dispositio* concerns the ordering of words, clauses, and punctuation within a sentence; music likewise deals with the ordered structuring and concatenation of phrases and periods (*periodologie*) which are delimited by cadences. On the large scale, *dispositio* shapes the overarching narrative or form so that sentiments unfold in a deliberate and intelligible sequence. Scholars such as Bonds and Gjerdingen have analyzed these patterns in terms of syntax, genre, and style.³ The present study takes this one step further: it treats such structures not as abstract

¹ Cicero. *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, p. 40.

² Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 53.

³ For further reading, and a detailed study of the rhetorical concept of form in this period, see Mark Evan Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*. For information on musical grammar and structure in the context of *partimento* tradition, see Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*.

Bonds acknowledges that no eighteenth-century theorist produced a highly detailed or comprehensive account of rhetorical form in music, often opting instead for more conceptual descriptions, or more basic grammatical explorations, leaving form to the discretion of the reader. Yet, the concept of form is clearly in the *Zeitgeist* of the late eighteenth century: how did such concepts get communicated? While Bonds does not speculate on the reasons for this, the modern desire for analytical precision might reflect an “objectivist” tendency not shared by earlier thinkers. For eighteenth-century musicians, several factors likely discouraged such exhaustive theorizing: first, it would have been overly complex and pedantic; second, in contrast to ideas expressed by figures like Rousseau (see 3.2), a rigid system could be stiff, and fail to accommodate the imaginative flexibility and reliance on “Nature” valued at the time; and third, it was not necessary—musicians learned through imitation and emulation in *partimento* practice, developing a practical and intuitive grasp of form and taste that was an outgrowth of their

formal designs, but as practical guides for delivery. Divisions in a work give the orator waypoints: places where a passion is to be newly introduced, intensified, contrasted, or released; points where energy should gather, and points where it should subside. In this view, for a performer to grasp *dispositio* involves comprehending when to experience specific emotions and how to regulate the flow of inner feelings to ensure that the psychological trajectory of the performance remains “natural” and intelligible.

This chapter will develop these implications, treating *dispositio* as the bridge between a work’s formal plan—an inherently external characteristic—and the coupling of inner feeling to outward expression in embodied delivery. In this view, musical structure becomes a dynamic map of affective causality, guiding the performer in shaping a coherent movement of passions in time. To begin, various notions of musical disposition will be examined through readings of period writers. This will be connected to period conceptions of theme and subject, and how rhetorical, and more specifically, musical *dispositio* is considered on the small scale (periods) and large scale (movement length form).

7.1 Dispositio as Ordering in Music

Both Heinrich Christoph Koch and Johann Nikolaus Forkel discuss a musical notion of *dispositio* as a narrative continuity of feeling. In composing sonatas, Koch insists, the proper ordering and arrangement of sentiments is essential. Musical thought, he argues, unfolds according to principles analogous to those governing rhetoric and poetry: it must present its ideas “in their natural order,” so that each thought follows intelligibly from the last. In the process he calls *Ausführung* (execution), the composer transforms the initial idea into a narrated sequence of *Hauptperioden* (main periods) whose task is to reveal and modulate the governing affect in coherent stages.⁴ Forkel similarly notes that without such ordering, both composers and poets risk mixing incompatible emotions and producing attractive but unfocused “musical fantasias or poetic rhapsodies” rather than well-formed sonatas or odes:

It would lead composers astray, just as it leads poets astray, allowing them to indulge in flights of fancy, combining feelings that have too little to do with each other, and producing perhaps beautiful musical fantasias or poetic rhapsodies, but no sonatas or odes, if reason there and taste here (by taste, in the musical sense, I mean nothing other than the refined feeling of what is true, right and beautiful, arising from the totality of musical principles) did not know how to properly consider and arrange what the fiery imagination and enthusiasm should take as its path.⁵

thoroughbass training. This absence of a systematic theory poses little issue for the rhetorical performer today, who can still interpret structural principles from existing sources to discern a work’s *telos*.

⁴ Koch, “Ausführung”, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Sp. 188–89.

⁵ Sie würde hier den Componisten, so wie dort den Dichter auf Abwege führen, Schwärmereyen erlauben, Gefühle, die zu wenig Beziehung auf einanderhaben, mit einander verbinden, und überhaupt zwar vielleicht schöne musikalische Phantasien oder dichterische Rhapsodien, aber keine Sonaten oder Oden hervorbringen, wenn dort die Vernunft und hier der Geschmack

According to Forkel, without taste, fancy would produce unfocused works, unless reason and taste intervene to determine the proper course of expression. Like Alexander Gerard, Forkel defines taste here as a sense of fitness and awareness of *telos*: a formulation that clarifies its regulatory function.

Koch develops a similar principle for performers. In order to not be led astray from the main “feelings,” performers must use reason to discern the principal ideas within a composition’s structure such that they foreground them in delivery.⁶ More importantly, the purpose of disposition is not to just awaken a feeling, but to sustain it through structure, unity, and variety. For Koch:

It is not enough for a piece of music to evoke this or that feeling, nor is it enough for the nerve of this feeling to be merely touched; rather, this touch must be sustained, and indeed sustained in varying degrees of strength and weakness, that is, the feeling must be presented in various modifications; and this is precisely the actual business of the performance and its ultimate purpose. Remaining at one and the same level of intensity and weakness, the persistence of an evoked sensation is inconceivable, for it is by its very nature a constant ebb and flow, produced by the diversity and variety of its modifications.⁷

In Koch’s view, just as a composition must organize its ideas so that the principal affect returns, intensifies, relaxes, or transforms in comprehensible stages, so the performer must enact this same internal logic through delivery. Affect thus becomes legible and sustainable when its modifications—its gradations of strength and weakness, its swells, diminutions, hesitations, counters, and renewals—are shaped with *telos*. Thus, in relation to disposition, Koch shifts the performer’s task away from merely expressing individual moments of sentiment toward sustaining a coherent affective trajectory across the entire structure. For Koch, expression that does not grow out of the disposition of the piece loses unity and direction. It risks becoming a sequence of isolated sensations—precisely the aesthetic incoherence that both he and Forkel condemn.

The accounts of Forkel and Koch thus converge on a shared aesthetic: a sentimental narrative should “mirror nature” by following a causal or experiential progression intelligible to human feeling. For example, abrupt or arbitrary leaps from triumph to despair, then to indifference and sudden elation,

(unter Geschmack verstehe ich im musikalischen Verstande nichts anders, als das aus den gesammten musikalischen Grundsätzen entstehende abgezogene Gefühl des Wahren Richtigen und Schönen) nicht gehörig zu überdenken und anzuordnen wüßte, was die feurige Einbildungskraft und Begeisterung für einen Weg nehmen soll.

Johann Nikolaus Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1783), pp. 27–28.

⁶ Koch, “Ausführung”, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Sp. 188–89.

⁷ Es ist nicht genug, daß ein Tonstück diese oder jene Empfindung erwecke, nicht genug, daß gleichsam der Nerve dieser Empfindung nur gerührt werde, sondern diese Rührung muß anhaltend, und zwar in verschiedener Stärke und Schwäche anhaltend seyn, das ist, die Empfindung muß in verschiedenen Modifikationen dargestellt werden; und dieses ist ja eben das eigentliche Geschäft der Ausführung und der Endzweck derselben. Auf einer und eben derselben Stufe, der Stärke und Schwäche verweilend, läßt sich die Fortdauer einer erweckten Empfindung nicht denken, denn sie ist ihrer Natur nach eine beständige Ebbe und Fluth, die von der Verschiedenheit und Mannigfaltigkeit ihrer Modifikationen hervorgebracht wird. Koch, “Ausführung”, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Sp. 190.

without adequate preparation, would produce an enigmatic sequence rather than a moving one. In these cases, the listener would lose the thread of inner life because the emotional transitions lack rhetorical or psychological continuity. For rhetorical performers, these principles carry significant consequences. In Koch's view, the performer must therefore determine at which structural points particular passions should be inwardly adopted, how they should grow, decay, or transform, and how one affect should yield to another through expressive transitions.

7.2 Theme and Subject

The main theme, subject, or *Hauptsatz* is a main characteristic melody that defines the prevailing idea of a musical discourse. Mattheson defines the principal statement, as analogous to what the subject is to an orator.⁸ This is equivalent to the main argument of an oratorical discourse, which must be stated and supported to be persuasive. A speech can have several 'main points,' as well as contrasting ideas, confirmations, refutations, and more: hence, a musical discourse can have main themes and secondary themes that together regulate how feeling is introduced, sustained, and transformed over time.

Mattheson's conception of the musical oration or *Klangrede* is founded on concepts of structural unity stemming from prevailing "subjects" or "themes" that establish the main idea of a musical oration. The *Hauptsatz* is not simply a formal label but the site where a prevailing affect is most clearly projected, and from which subsequent expression takes its bearings.⁹ In the rhetorical view, a musical work, like any discourse, should exhibit purposeful development of ideas. Throughout his *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783), Blair emphasized an underlying theme that every composition (in language) must have a clear unity of design drawn from *telos*: all parts should work together to convey the central thesis or "subject." Similarly, in his *Essay on Musical Expression* (1752), Charles Avison elaborates an extended metaphor of musical expression as painting. In a grand painting, especially in the genre of history painting, one figure is made most prominent, with all other figures arranged subordinate to it. Comparably, in large-scale musical works, there should be a "principal or leading Subject [...] which ought to prevail, and be heard through the whole Composition; and to which both the Air and Harmony of the other Parts ought to be [...] subordinate."¹⁰ A good composer, like a good painter, maintains clarity of the principal theme throughout, ensuring the listener's attention is fixed on the musical "main figure" of the piece and giving the performer a stable focal point around which to organise their own expressive energy. But often, in paintings, a group of figures is depicted, often supporting the main subject, and also filling out the overall scene with richness and texture.¹¹ Likewise, musical compositions often have secondary subjects, provided that the composer proportionately

⁸ Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 4, §15; trans. Ernest C. Harris, p. 283.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Part II, ch. 4, §14–16; trans. Ernest C. Harris, pp. 283–84.

¹⁰ Avison, *Essay on Musical Expression*, p. 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

adjusts the disposition of musical ideas to show which are principal and subordinate and thus which sentiments should dominate or merely colour the unfolding discourse.

Such notions of “main subject” and “theme” were also expressed by Johann Philipp Kirnberger in his article on musical *Hauptsatz* for Johann Georg Sulzer’s *Allgemeine Theorie* (1771–74). Here, Kirnberger defines it as the central “period within a musical work that incorporates the expression and the whole essence of the melody.”¹² He likens the *Hauptsatz* to the biblical text of a sermon, which “must contain in a few words that which the discourse will develop more fully,” emphasizing that the *Hauptsatz* must use *topoi* that would render the main idea succinctly and with lucidity. While even a brief phrase can convey a sentiment clearly, he notes that music’s goal is to “engage the listener for a period of time in the same emotional state,”¹³ which requires more than mere repetition. To achieve this sustained effect, composers vary and develop the main theme through different harmonies, keys, and interpolated idea. It is also “supported or interrupted by smaller, interpolated ideas [*Zwischengedanken*] appropriate to it.”¹⁴ As Kirnberger summarizes:

It is in this manner that the form of most of our usual current musical works has arisen: concertos, symphonies, arias, duets, trios, fugues, etc. They all have this in common: that they are based on a *Hauptsatz* presented in a main period, brief and appropriate to the expression of a sentiment; that this *Hauptsatz* is supported or interrupted by smaller, interpolated ideas [*Zwischengedanken*] appropriate to it; that this *Hauptsatz* and these *Zwischengedanken* are repeated often enough, in different harmonies and keys, and with small melodic variations, so that the spirit of the listener is sufficiently captivated.¹⁵

This method shapes the structure of concertos, symphonies, arias, and other forms. Similarly, Carl Ludwig Junker in his *Betrachtungen über Mahlerey, Ton- und Bildhauerkunst* (1778) emphasizes

¹² Hauptsatz. (Musik.) Ist in einem Tonstück eine Periode, welche den Ausdruck und das ganze Wesen der Melodie in sich begreift, und nicht nur gleich anfangs vorkömmt, sondern durch das ganze Tonstück oft, in verschiedenen Tönen, und mit verschiedenen Veränderungen, wiederholt wird. Der Hauptsatz wird insgemein das Thema genannt; und Mattheson vergleicht ihn nicht ganz unrecht mit dem Text einer Predigt, der in wenig Worten das enthalten muss, was in der Abhandlung ausführlicher entwickelt wird. Die Musik ist eigentlich die Sprache der Empfindung, deren Ausdruck allezeit

kurz ist, weil die Empfindung an sich selbst etwas einfaches ist, das sich durch wenig Aeusserungen an den Tag leget. Desswegen kann ein sehr kurzer melodischer Satz von zwey, drey oder vier Takten eine Empfindung so bestimmt und richtig ausdrücken, dass der Zuhörer genau den Gemüthszustand der singenden Person daraus erkennt. Wenn also ein Tonstück nichts anders zur Absicht hätte, als eine Empfindung bestimmt an den Tag zu legen, so wäre ein solcher kurzer Satz, wenn er glücklich ausgedacht wäre, dazu hinlänglich. Aber dieses ist nicht die Absicht der Musik;

sie soll dienen den Zuhörer eine Zeitlang in demselben Gemüthszustande zu unterhalten. Dieses kann durch blosser Wiederholung desselben Satzes, so furtrefflich er sonst ist, nicht geschehen, weil die Wiederholung derselben Sache langweilig ist und die Aufmerksamkeit gleich zu Boden schlägt. Also musste man eine Art des Gesanges erfinden, in welchem ein und eben dieselbe Empfindung, mit gehöriger Abwechslung und in verschiedenen Modificationen, so oft konnte wiederholt werden, bis sie den gehörigen Eindruck gemacht haben würde. Kirnberger, Sulzer (ed.), “Hauptsatz”, *Allgemeine Theorie der Schönen Künste* (Leipzig: 1771–74), trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, pp. 94–95.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kirnberger, Sulzer (ed.), “Hauptsatz”, trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, pp. 94–95. See full German text in note 12.

¹⁵ Ibid.

that a theme is the “principal idea” or “concentrated sentiment” that ensures “unity in variety” within a composition.¹⁶ Like Avison, he compares the composer’s theme to the painter’s focus on a hero or the poet’s moral truth, explaining that elements like key, motion, and form all develop from this central idea to maintain clarity of expression. Likewise, Johann Nepomuk Reichenberger in *Die ganze Musikkunst* (1780) describes how a composer introduces the *Satz* or theme early, repeating it so it is “well understood,” then develops contrasting passages that may seem divergent but ultimately return to the “sentence and goal in the original key,” unifying all expressive detours.¹⁷

In these sources, the concept of the *Hauptsatz* or theme plays a central role in articulating both the expressive purpose and the formal logic of a musical discourse. In rhetorical terms, the *Hauptsatz* corresponds to the *propositio*—the opening sections of an oration in which the orator states the subject and its *telos* or aim. In music, this *telos* is not argumentative in a strictly logical sense but appeals to *pathos* via the presentation of a prevailing sentiment that will govern the rest of the piece. For the performer, the subject therefore marks the initial “setting” of inner feeling to which subsequent passages must remain related, whether by confirmation, intensification, contrast, or negation. This sentiment is not abstract but immediately graspable, drawing arguments of invention through musical painting.

7.3 Small-Scale Disposition: Rhetorical Grammar and Sentence Building

7.3.1 Periods and Pauses

On the small scale, *dispositio* governs how musical ideas are divided into sentences, clauses, and points of rest (punctuation) that the listener can follow them as they unfold in a performance. Koch’s *Musikalisches Lexikon* (1802) defines musical rhetoric as the art of combining “individual melodic segments into a whole according to a certain purpose,” contrasting grammar, which corrects the “material part,” with rhetoric, the aesthetic part that governs how these elements are ordered.¹⁸ Koch also mentions that these principles inform musical performance as a form of declamation.¹⁹ Similarly, Momigny in his Paris Conservatoire treatise (1803–06) describes composition as linking “cadences or musical propositions” just as speech links verbal propositions.²⁰ Both emphasize that music, like

¹⁶ Carl Ludwig Junker, *Betrachtungen über Mahlerey, Ton-und Bildhauerkunst* (Basel: K. A. Serini, 1778), pp. 82–83; trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 97.

¹⁷ Johann Nepomuk Reichenberger, *Die ganze Musikkunst*, 3 vols. (Regensburg: Hochfürstlich-bischöfliches Schulhaus bey St. Paul, 1777–1780), III, 160–161; trans. in Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, 100.

¹⁸ So nennen einige Tonlehrer diejenige zur Setzkunst gehörige Wissenschaft, nach welcher einzelne melodische Theile nach einem bestimmten Zwecke zu einem Ganzen verbunden werden. Durch die Grammatik wird der materielle Theil der Kunstausdrücke berichtet: die Rhetorik hingegen bestimmt die Regeln, nach welchen sie bey einem Kunstwerke dem auszuführenden Zwecke gemäss zusammengesetzt werden müssen. Koch, „Rhetorik“, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Sp. 1250.

¹⁹ Koch, „Rhetorik“, *Musikalisches Lexikon*, Sp. 1253.

²⁰ L’art de composer un discours est celui d’enchaîner un certain nombre de Propositions, selon l’ordre grammatical, logique et oratoire; l’art de composer un Morceau de musique n’est que celui d’enchaîner, sous les mêmes rapports, un certain nombre de Cadences ou Propositions musicales. Jérôme-Joseph de Momigny, *Cours complet d’harmonie et de composition*, 3 vols. (Paris: Author, 1803–06), I, p. 134.

oratory, depends on logical sequencing and clear purpose: grammar ensures well-formed materials, while rhetoric organizes them into a persuasive, expressive whole that can be effectively delivered.

The sentence—or period—is the fundamental unit of structured expression, which constitutes a logically complete thought and, in delivery, a complete idea to be projected. In Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric* (1783), drawing on Aristotle, a *Periodus* or period is “a form of Speech which hath a beginning and an end within itself, and is of such a length as to be easily comprehended at once.”²¹ Blair notes that a period consists of members, which may be few or many, and which can be combined or divided in various ways without breaking the sense of the thought being conveyed.²² Eighteenth-century music theorists connected the structure of music to that of spoken language, emphasizing how meaning emerges through carefully placed resting points. Kirnberger explains that in language, a sentence’s full meaning is only clear at its end, providing a sense of completeness; similarly, a succession of musical notes is understood as a whole only when it arrives at a “resting point” that satisfies the ear. Before this closure, the listener remains “anxious” to know what the phrase intends to communicate.²³ Koch develops this parallel further by describing how major resting points in speech divide it into “sentences [*Perioden*],” while smaller pauses break these into “clauses [*Sätze*]” and even finer “parts of speech [*Redetheile*].”²⁴ He argues that music works the same way, with cadences and melodic punctuation creating periods, phrases, and segments that make the unfolding musical thought intelligible and expressive. Similarly, Galeazzi in his *Elementi teorico-pratici di musica* (1791) calls melody a “type of discourse,” complete with its own “periods, clauses, prosody, and rhetorical art.”²⁵ He insists that just as spoken sentences must conclude so the mind is “content with what was said,” musical periods must close in a way that leaves the listener “perfectly content and satisfied.”²⁶ For Galeazzi, cadences are like full stops in speech, marking the end of an idea and providing necessary semantic closure.

Sheridan and Walker highlight the rhetorical importance of pauses in speech, comparing them to punctuation that clarifies relationships between ideas and preserves sense. Sheridan notes that pauses “point out the connection and dependence” of words and clauses,²⁷ while Walker explains they “preserve the sense of a sentence” by uniting related elements and separating unrelated ones.²⁸ Walker

²¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 243.

²² Ibid.

²³ Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik*, 2 vols. (Berlin and Königsberg: G. J. Decker and G. L. Härtung, 1771-1779), pt. 2, set. 1, p. 105; trans. David Beach and Jürgen Thym’s edition, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp. 404–405.

²⁴ Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, 3 vols (Leipzig: Adam Friedrich Böhme, 1782–93), vol. II, sect. 3, §77; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, *Introductory Essay on Composition: The mechanical rules of melody*. (Yale: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 1.

²⁵ Francesco Galeazzi, *The Theoretical-Practical Elements of Music, Parts III and IV: A translation of Elementi teorico-pratici di musica*, trans. Deborah Burton and Gregory W. Harwood (University of Illinois Press, 2012), p. 164.

²⁶ Galeazzi, *The Theoretical-Practical Elements of Music, Parts III and IV*, p. 164.

²⁷ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 63.

²⁸ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, pp. 29–30.

also describes a hierarchy of pauses—from the brief comma to the longer semicolon, colon, and period—each marking increasingly complete units of thought. When a sentence has been perfectly fulfilled in sense, such that it does not excite any expectation of following members, it is terminated by a period, which marks a complete idea.²⁹ Analogously, as will be proposed below, a hierarchy of cadential closure in music (half-cadence, imperfect cadence, perfect cadence) offers the performer a graduated scale of repose and continuation, indicating when to sustain tension and when to allow full release. Just as punctuation shapes complex written sentences, cadences and phrase breaks in music establish order and clarity in the musical narrative. Small-scale *dispositio* therefore arguably gives the performer a detailed roadmap for delivery that directly couples with both agogics and rubato: where to breathe, where to linger, where to press forward, and where to let the sentiment settle. In this view, hierarchical structuring ensures that both speech and music deliver their content in an intelligible, expressive, and persuasive manner.

These theorists emphasise that both language and music depend on structured divisions that guide the listener through a sequence of ideas. Just as Aaron Hill advised actors to continue the excitement of sentiment “warm” pauses,³⁰ resting points arguably do more than organise material: they provide external constraints that channel how an inner movement of feeling may unfold. For the rhetorical performer, recognising these divisions would be the precondition for shaping delivery. But arguably, these structures do not merely follow or box-in feeling into compartments; they also regulate its flow through properties like emotional inertia. An orator whose inner sensibility is tightly coupled to such external patterns could allow their emotions to develop along the given points of rest and continuation within a discourse—using each cadence or pause as an opportunity to enact rubato and agogics that gather, redirect, or release sentiment. In this way, *dispositio* on the small scale offers not only a map for the listener, but also a framework within which the performer’s inner world is shaped, paced, and made communicable.

7.3.2 Style and Unity

Small-scale *dispositio* does not only decide where a phrase begins and ends; it also determines how tightly its parts hang together, and thus how an orator must pace their unfolding. Eighteenth-century rhetoricians were acutely aware that different sentence designs produce different patterns of dependence between members, and therefore different expressive trajectories in delivery. Blair distinguishes between two principal styles of sentence construction: the *Style Périodique* and the *Style Coupé*. Blair’s distinction will prove useful in analyzing the dependencies that lie between disparate members in both musical and verbal discourses.

²⁹ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 36.

³⁰ See Chapter 4.2.2.

The *Style Périodique*—which Blair calls the most “pompous,” “oratorical,” “Ciceronian,” and even “musical”—consists of sentences composed of interdependent clauses, or members, that hang upon one another, delaying the full sense until the sentence’s end.³¹ This style gives a sense of formality, gravity, and rhetorical weight. Blair praises it for the air of dignity it confers upon composition, particularly in elevated writing.³² Blair gives an example from writer, William Temple:

If you look about you, and consider the lives of others as well as your own; if you think how few are born with honour, and how many die without name or children; how little beauty we see, and how few friends we hear of; how many diseases, and how much poverty there is in the world; you will fall down upon your knees, and, instead of repining at one affliction, will admire so many blessings which you have received from the hand of God. (*Letter to Lady Essex.*)

In contrast, the *Style Coupé*, forms the sense in “short independent propositions, each complete within itself.”³³ This style, which comes from “modern” French prose, “is more lively and striking” and suits “gay and easy subjects.”³⁴ Blair gives an example from Alexander Pope:

I confess, it was want of consideration that made me an author. I writ, because it amused me. I corrected, because it was as pleasant to me to correct as to write. I published, because, I was told, I might please such as it was a credit to please. (*Preface to his works.*)

Because of the way they divide a text, the use of punctuation marks in these different styles of writing will lead to a different delivery and inflection. As will be discussed below through the writings of John Walker, the *Style Périodique* favours more melody, and the *Style Coupé* more rapidity.³⁵ Underlying both styles, however, is the rhetorical necessity of unity. As Blair notes, “in every composition, of whatever kind, some degree of unity is required, in order to render it beautiful. There must be always some connecting principle among the parts. Some one object must reign and be predominant.”³⁶ Blair insists that even in the smallest unit of composition, there must be a prevailing object, a central thought, to which all parts are bound. Moreover, “in a single sentence, is required the strictest unity. For the very nature of a sentence implies one proposition to be expressed. It may consist of parts, indeed; but these parts must be so closely bound together, as to make the impression upon the mind, of one object, not of many.”³⁷ In this view, the sentence, no matter how ornate or fragmented in appearance, must leave the impression of a coherent *telos*, not a scattered collection of thoughts.

³¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 244.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 245.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See artistic case study 1 on p. 247.

³⁶ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 257.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

7.3.3 Inflection and Cadence

In both oratory and music, cadences mark the points at which these small-scale structures come to rest, and so they are the primary means by which inner movement is divided and made intelligible in time.

In declamation, various writers propose that resting points are managed through vocal inflection: the “melody” of speech in tones, slides of pitch, and inflections. In Walker’s influential account, when a sentence does not yet complete its meaning, it ends with a rising inflection—a signal that more is to come. Understanding the structure of compound sentences is key to expressing complex meanings with layered ideas and emphasis are crucial. Addressing speakers of English, Walker distinguishes between two main types of sentences in the *style périodique*: the period, or compact sentence, and the loose sentence. In compact sentences, meaning arises from the interplay between dependent and modifying parts, either with earlier clauses relying on later ones (direct period) or later clauses refining the sense of the former (inverted period).³⁸ In contrast, loose sentences begin with an independent thought that is not altered by what follows.³⁹ Walker also describes the series, gradation, or climax, where several distinct but related elements build toward a unified sense.⁴⁰ Inflection follows these structures. When a complete thought is fulfilled, a falling inflection precedes the end, often prepared by a gradual descent in pitch: “every word in the last part of the sentence slides gradually lower until the voice drops upon the last.”⁴¹ This creates a cadence that arguably makes a satisfying pause, allowing ideas to “sink in.” In sequences of related sentences, like in *style coupé*, Walker explains that each sentence receives a falling inflection, but only the final one descends into the lowest tone, thus shaping a larger cadence across a paragraph.⁴² Thus, the design of the sentence, which is an external constraint, prescribes a pattern of rises and falls that the orator’s inner feelings and thoughts must be coupled to. In this way, when the orator delivers following this structure, the ebb and flow of their outward expression will be a product of the way the inner feelings unfold. Expectation is prolonged in the *Style Périodique*, more rapidly fulfilled in the *style coupé*.

In music, various writers propose that a similar logic applies to melodic and harmonic inflection. Inflection is a feature of melody. As Kirnberger noted, a succession of notes becomes meaningful only when it reaches a point of rest—a cadence—where the ear can gather what has come before into a coherent phrase. These resting points may be complete, with full harmonic closure, or incomplete, leaving room for continuation. A complete cadence, he explains, is like a full stop. An incomplete cadence, or a melodic close lacking a strong bass resolution, is more like a comma or

³⁸ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 41.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 86–87.

⁴² *Ibid.*

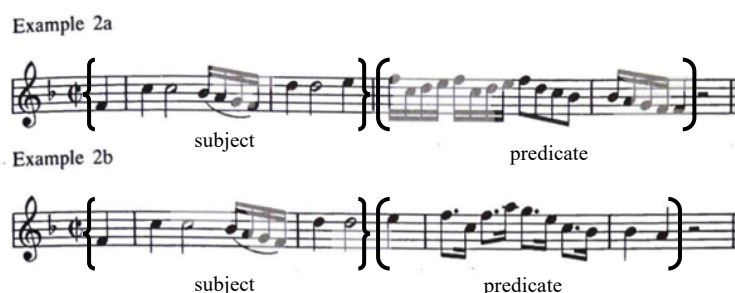
colon: it suggests a pause, not a conclusion.⁴³ Koch offers a more detailed vocabulary for these musical sentences (*Sätze*) noting that a basic phrase (*enger Satz*) contains just enough material to form a unit of complete thought. An extended phrase (*erweiterter Satz*) elaborates or clarifies the thought, while a compound phrase (*zusammengeschobener Satz*) links several complete units into a broader structure.⁴⁴

Furthermore, both Riepel and Koch proposed that musical sentences, like verbal clauses, required a subject-predicate structure to become a comprehensible unit. Both demonstrated that small metrical units, which formed subjects and predicates, combined together to produce a musical discourse, and the sense of completeness for the ear was determined by melodic and harmonic resolution. This is illustrated by Koch in a number of examples, showing how a single subject can have multiple predicates. Koch's example 1 has a subject (a member consisting of the first two bars) and predicate (the last two bars) forming a complete thought. The brackets have been added here by the author for clarity and illustrative purposes but are not found in Koch's original.



Musical Example 1. Koch's examples of basic musical grammar, Example 1, 4.⁴⁵

In Koch's examples 2a and 2b, the same subject from example 1 is combined with a different predicate.



Musical Example 2. Koch's examples of basic musical grammar, Example 2a and b, 5.⁴⁶

However, in Example 3, due to the incomplete cadence (the melody does not land on **1**), a complete thought is not formed:

⁴³ Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik*, 2 vols. (Berlin: G. J. Decker and G. L. Härtung, 1771–79), pt. 2, set. 1, p. 105.

⁴⁴ Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, vol. II, ch. 1, §81–82; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, pp. 3–7.

⁴⁵ Taken from Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

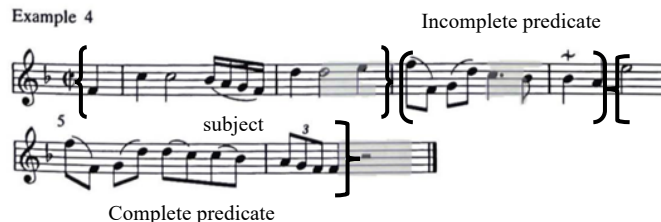
Example 3



Musical Example 3. Koch's examples of basic musical grammar, Example 3, 5.⁴⁷

In Example 3, by contrast, the cadence is incomplete (the melody does not land on **1**), so a complete thought is not formed; only when a further predicate is added in Example 4—ending with a full cadence on **1**—does the phrase achieve closure.

Example 4



Musical Example 4. Koch's examples of basic musical grammar, Example 4, 5.⁴⁸

Further variations of this concatenation, which feature the subject + incomplete predicate + complete predicate, are shown in Examples 5, 6, and 7.

Example 5



Example 6



Example 7



Musical Example 5. Koch's examples of basic musical grammar, Example 5–7, 5–6.⁴⁹

These examples demonstrate Koch's theory of musical sentence-building: small metrical units, governed by grammatical rules, combine to produce periods that are "complete in sense." Composition is governed by a phrase syntax: composers should ensure that each small unit (incise or phrase) has proper punctuation and that these units connect logically to form periods and sections. The placement and type of cadence control how meaning unfolds and how listeners perceive the shape of the discourse. For the performer assuming such an approach, arguably, this syntax is not merely analytical; it prescribes how tension and release should be felt and projected—where to sustain intensity, and where

⁴⁷ Taken from Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, p. 5.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

to let a full stop settle the sentiment. The placement and type of cadence could control how outward meaning unfolds and how listeners perceive the shape of the discourse.

This syntactic approach extends naturally to partimento schemata and their directed modulations. For example, Riepel's *fonte*, *monte*, and *ponte* are used to create modulations.⁵⁰ Because writers of the period often associated various keys with certain passions, these structured modulations would depict a transition of affect. For example, a *fonte* can be used to calm the passions. The *fonte* shown below in Johann Christian Bach's Sonata No. 5, Op. 5, modulates from b minor, what Schubart described as "gentle complaint,"⁵¹ to the naïve "innocent love" and "hopeful contentment"⁵² of A major. Here, the harmonic phrase and its cadences trace a carefully graded change of affect, and arguably, the rhetorical performer's task is to feel and express the emotional inertia of that transition as a coherent emotional trajectory rather than as a mere technical indication.



Musical Example 6. Adagio from J.C. Bach's Sonata in E major, No. 5 Op. 5. Welcker, n.d. [1765], p. 27.

7.3.4 Examining Species of Musical Cadences and Pauses

Having established how periods, clauses, and cadential points divide discourse into intelligible units, the next step is to link specific musical techniques to their rhetorical function. In what follows, certain technical and analytical features of cadence—melodic shape, bass motion, harmonic pattern, and placement—are treated as cues for delivery.

Cadences of the period are often defined by their melodic and harmonic schemata, which determine their degree of closure. These schematic shapes—especially the interaction of bass and melodic voice—parallel the inflections of the speaking voice described by Walker, giving the listener a felt sense of openness, suspension, or full arrival that is the outward expression of emotional inertia.

⁵⁰ For a list of schemata, see Gjerdingen, "Appendix A: Schema Prototypes" in *Music in the Galant Style*, pp. 453–464. The body of the book provides detailed explanations, examples and applications of these prototypes.

⁵¹ *B moll.* Ein Sonderling, mehrentheils in das Gewand der Nacht gekleidet. Er ist etwas mürrisch, und nimmt höchst selten eine gefällige Miene an. Moquerien gegen Gott und die Welt; Miss vergnügen mit sich und allem; Vorbereitung zum Selbstmord — hallen in diesem Tone. Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, p. 378; trans. Ted Alan Du Bois, p. 436.

⁵² *A dur.* Dieser Ton enthält Erklärungen *unschuldiger Liebe*, *Zufriedenheit* über seinen Zustand; *Hoffnung des Wiedersehens* beym *Scheiden des Geliebten*; jugendliche Heiterkeit, und Gottesvertrauen. Ibid., p. 379; trans. Ted Alan Du Bois, p. 435.

Because harmony, metre, and context further nuance these shapes, cadences gain a wide palette of expressive possibilities. They can therefore be categorised, creating a kind of punctuation system for musical-rhetorical grammar that organises notes into members, periods, phrases, and paragraphs with a logic akin to spoken language. Examining the writings of various musical theorists gives a more comprehensive picture of how effective closure—and the consequent duration and “weight” of rest—can be understood and realised in performance. In this way, cadential type tells the performer how ideas relate and depend on one another: whether a passage constitutes a full assertion, a parenthesis, a question, a preparation, or a deferral. By recognising whether a cadence is full, partial, deceptive, averted, or evaded, the rhetorical performer could shape the musical discourse with clarity—highlighting moments of arrival, strain, or transition—and reveal the underlying logic and flow of the composition.

While the modern definition of a cadence is purely harmonic and chordal in nature, eighteenth-century cadences are defined not just by their harmony, but by, as musicologist John Walter Hill describes, “a combination of melodic activity, chordal progression, formal context, rhythmic design, and metrical placement.”⁵³ In more recent discourse, the Latin term for cadence, *clausulae*, are often defined as specific contrapuntal figures which bring about a perceived sense of closure, whose species depend on voice leading.⁵⁴ While the notion of a “cadence” and associated classifications (“perfect”, “imperfect”, “plagal”, “deceptive”, etc.) became prominent in mid nineteenth-century discourse on music theory, these definitions do not adequately classify or account for the intricacies of melodic and bass movement important in eighteenth-century music that arise from the *basso continuo* practice and trace their roots to Renaissance polyphony. For period writers, the relative strength of different *clausulae*—their power to satisfy or prolong expectation—depends on the coordinated motion of bass and treble, and thus on how decisively they “speak” closure to the ear. The relative strength of different *clausulae* in their ability to provide closure are defined by the corresponding motion of bass and treble voices.⁵⁵ To explain these intricacies in the following sections, the following convention ⑤ (wherein the background is white) will represent scale degrees in the bass, while ③ (wherein the background is shaded) will represent scale degrees in the melody.

Riepel denotes the caesura (*Einschnitt*, *Abschnitt*) as a separator between metrical feet, and it is the smallest unit of pause, falling below the comma in the hierarchy of punctuations.⁵⁶ Cadences (*Cadenz*) provide principal pauses in musical punctuation. For these, Riepel distinguishes between “complete” (*vollkommene*): which create a sense of conclusiveness, and “incomplete” (*unvollkommene*)

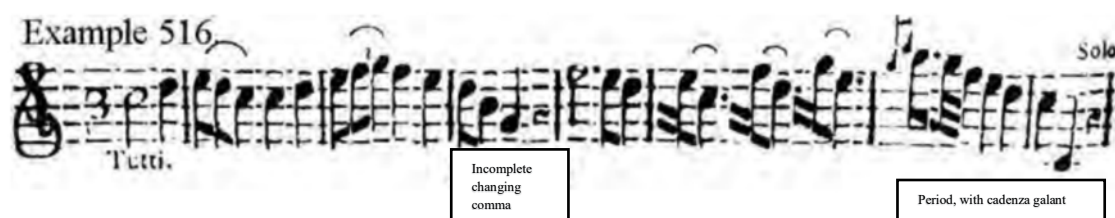
⁵³ Hill, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 356.

⁵⁴ Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, p. 139.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁵⁶ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, xv.

cadences: which “are not sufficient to put the ear at rest completely at the end of a piece of music.”⁵⁷ Complete cadences have the power to create a “curtailed conclusion,” or a period (*Schluß*). An example of a complete period from Riepel is shown below. The classifications of each of the intervening commas is elaborated in the following section. From the standpoint of delivery, the more tightly a rhetorical performer’s sensibility is coupled to these levels of punctuation, the more naturally phrasing, timing, and affect will align with the music’s underlying grammar.



Musical Example 7. Riepel’s example of a full musical sentence.⁵⁸

Periods

Periods are cadences which conclude full sentences (also sometimes called periods or *Perioden*.) For Riepel, they are “demonstrations of proof” or “complete conclusions”⁵⁹ and are often approached by a general fall in the inflection of the melody. The strongest cadences are species of the *clausulae perfectissimae*, or “the most complete type of close.”⁶⁰ According to Riepel, this cadence must contain the bass clausula motion ⑤ – ① and the melodic motion ③-②-① (a falling slide), and to be rhythmically complete, must land conclude on the downbeat.⁶¹ Harmonically and melodically, this is the musical equivalent of a full stop: the line sinks to the tonic, the bass confirms it, and the metrical accent seals the sense.

As defined in Neapolitan *partimento* practice, a *clausula perfectissima* with a direct ⑤ – ① motion was defined as a *cadenza semplice*, while a repeated ⑤ with 6/4 - 5/3 motion in upper voices was defined as a *cadenza composia* or compound ending. It was often common to precede this cadence with a 6-chord built on the ④, and an expansion of this chord was a schema that Gjerdingen terms the *Indugio*.⁶² Another important *cadenza composia* was the *cadenza galante*, as called by musicologist Charles Cudworth. It was frequently utilized in the mid-to-late-eighteenth century and is characterized by the melody gracefully falling through the entire scale: ⑦-⑥-⑤-④-③-②-①, where the ⑦ is often notated as an *appoggiatura*. This extremely long and decisive downwards slide creates a very

⁵⁷ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel’s Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁶⁰ Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, p. 141.

⁶¹ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel’s Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 356.

⁶² Gjerdingen. *Music in the Galant Style*, p. 141. Please refer to the chapter on “*Clausulae*” for complete set of examples of the *clausulae perfectissima*.

strong, definitive close, and it is no wonder that this type of cadence is often used at the ends of paragraphs to signify a conclusion.⁶³ Musical Example 8 shows this type of cadence:



Musical Example 8. Examples of the *cadenza galante*.

In this way, the *cadenza galante* could be a musical analogue to the pronunciation of a period in declamation. Walker had identified a similar way to declaim at the period, creating closure with a long falling inflection. In his account, this cadence is achieved through a gradual fall in tone on the concluding words.⁶⁴

Commas

A comma is the name given by Riepel to a type of cadence that delimits a subordinate member or incomplete predicate in a period, which are often called commas (*Absatz*) in German grammar. In the *style périodique*, these clauses form a hierarchy of premises, and depending on their order in the hierarchy, they could be delimited by a colon or a semicolon, depending on their weight. Musically, commas signal that an idea has reached a local resting point without exhausting the larger argument: they invite a momentary easing of tension, but the underlying affect remains in motion. The table below, based on Riepel's Chapter 1 classifications from examples, shows two main categorizations: tonic commas (*Grund-Absatz*, *Grundsatz*), which affirm or assert the current tonic tonality (*Haupt*, *Grundton*, *Hauptton*); and changing commas (*Änderungs-Absatz*), because they produce “a change (*Ausweichung*) of key” which “always appears.”⁶⁵

Table 2. Types of commas defined by Riepel

Category	Species (if defined)	Characteristics
Conclusive (<i>endlich</i>)		
Tonic commas (<i>Grund-Absatz</i> , <i>Grundsatz</i>)	Bass clausula with complete melodic motion but not functioning as a period.	⑤ – ① with ② – ① or sometimes (less commonly) ⑦ – ①

⁶³ Gjerdingen. *Music in the Galant Style*, pp. 146–147.

⁶⁴ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, pp. 84–85.

⁶⁵ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 209.

Inconclusive (<i>unendlich</i>)		⑤ – ①
Tonic commas (<i>Grund-Absatz,</i> <i>Grundsatz</i>)	Bass clausula with incomplete melodic motion	with ④ – ③ Or ② – ③
	soprano clausula (<i>clausula cantizans</i>)	⑦ – ①
	tenor clausula (<i>clausula tenorizans</i>)	② – ①
	alto clausula (<i>clausula altizans</i>)	④ – ③
Changing comma (<i>Änderungs-Absatz</i>)	Clausulae ending on the ⑤	① – ⑤
		② – ⑤
		④ – ⑤

From the standpoint of delivery, these distinctions are important. A tonic comma may be treated as a lighter breath, a slight relaxation that keeps the same emotional colour; a changing comma, by contrast, calls for a perceptible communication of “shift,” mirroring the modulation’s change of “place” and sentiment. In both cases, the external cadential pattern gently directs the performer’s inner course, channelling sensibility along a sequence of partial rests and renewed impulses rather than an undifferentiated stream.

Building on these basic hierarchies of periods and commas, later theorists such as Francesco Galeazzi and Daniel Gottlieb Türk refine how these signs should be heard and realised by a performer in delivery. Galeazzi’s 1791 treatise makes similar observations to Riepel’s. “Every period,” he writes, “is distinguished by its clauses; all this must be clearly distinguished by the perceptive melodist.”⁶⁶ His example of musical punctuation is marked below with the accompanying explanation.

⁶⁶ Francesco Galeazzi, *Elementi teorico-pratici di musica, con un saggio sopra l’arte di suonare il violino*, 2 vols (Rome: Nella Stamperia Pilucchi Cracas, 1791–96), IV.2.III.39.



Example 220

Musical Example 9. Galeazzi's examples of musical punctuation

- (A) Is a caesura
- (B) Is a tonic comma, which Galeazzi calls a “minor cadence” which terminates the clause, although even though the melody comes to a rest, it does not terminate the sentence because the ear does not “remain content but anxiously awaits the continuation.”⁶⁷
- (C) Is a changing comma.
- (D) Is a type of *cadenza galant* that concludes the sentence “because it is the terminus of a period.”⁶⁸

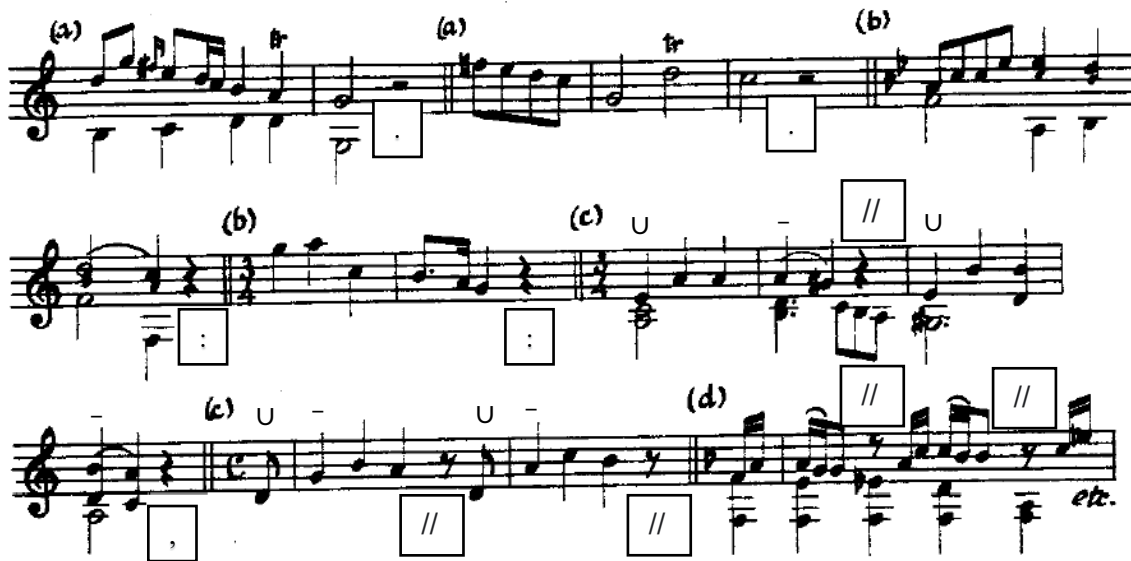
Galeazzi thus similarly proposes a hierarchy already articulated in the writings of Riepel. For the rhetorical performer, these marks could prescribe corresponding shades of relaxation and expectation—how far inner feeling may subside, and when it must be held in suspense—but they also could clarify how ideas relate to one another in the ongoing narrative: which clauses answer or question, which prepare or resolve, which digress or return. In this way, punctuation not only measures the rise and fall of affect; it maps the causal relations in which each phrase plays off its neighbours, so that sentiment is experienced as a continuous unfolding rather than a series of isolated episodes.

Taking the perspective of the keyboard performer, Türk in his *Clavierschule* (1789) highlights examples of musical punctuation that are near identical to Riepel's precepts, with examples adapted to the idiomatic style of his time. Shown in Musical Example 10: (a) is a “complete period;” showing a species of *cadenza galante* as well as an extremely idiomatic final trill sequence (b) which is a changing comma, is described by Türk as analogous to a *rhythmus* in verse (a change in rhythmic flow, usually denoted by a colon or semicolon in the middle of a line); (c) shows a twosome, or two iambic feet separated by a caesura (with a break in articulation), and terminated by a tonic comma; and (d) has rests that act as caesuras between two iambic feet. These cadences prescribe articulation. Türk's “player must immediately raise the finger from the key for notes which are intentionally separated from the following in order to make the phrase division perceptible.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Galeazzi, *Elementi teorico-pratici di musica*, IV.2.III.41.

⁶⁸ Ibid., IV.2.III.41.

⁶⁹ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 334.



Musical Example 10. Türk's examples of punctuation⁷⁰

Taken together, the examples of Riepel, Galeazzi, and Türk show that punctuation is not merely a compositional device but a shared rhetorical grammar binding composer and performer—very much in the spirit of Walker's linkage between written marks and vocal delivery.

Furthermore, musical punctuation does more than organise ideas as premises: it structures the progression of a sentimental narrative. Riepel claims that melodic segments and their punctuations “hurry toward,” “hurry back,” or “strive,”⁷¹ and commas must “call and answer each other in an orderly fashion.”⁷² For him, the tonic comma “affirms” or “answers” while the changing comma “questions.”⁷³ In this way, punctuation assigns a rhetorical *telos* and agency to the melody: phrases can assert, respond, hesitate, turn aside, or press forward.

From this perspective, musical propositions (*propositiones*) can be proposed, reinforced, affirmed, questioned, denied, and rebutted. In this view, the musical commas and periods are the basic building blocks of the musical language, and rhetoric is the art that composers use to build an entire composition from a simple musical premise. Galeazzi also mentions the use of various sentences and commas to create transitions. He calls these “periods of conjunction” and they “serve to connect effectively and unite together the various periods essential to the melody.”⁷⁴ Similar such constructions may be found in Riepel (*fonte, monte, ponte*) and Koch.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 333.

⁷¹ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 358.

⁷² Riepel, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 231.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 213–14.

⁷⁴ Galeazzi, *Elementi teorico-pratici di musica*, IV.2.III.42.

⁷⁵ See Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, vol. II, ch. 2–3, §105–125, trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, pp. 41–59.

7.3.5 Emphasis

Prosody encapsulates the patterns of rhythm, stress, and emphasis of speech. In poetics, prosody governs how syllables are arranged into metrical feet and how these affect the sound, flow, and emotional impact of speech. Words in language are composed of syllables, and every word has a specific stressed syllable. In *The Alliance of Musick, Poetry and Oratory* (1789), Anselm Bayly explains that speech accent involves the “elevation and depression of the voice” on certain syllables, corresponding to musical tones.⁷⁶ He adds that quantity determines syllable length, paralleling musical time; feet establish the metre, similar to melody; and rhythm organizes these elements into a harmonious structure combining sound, time, and meaning across verses.⁷⁷ Likewise, Mattheson defines that the *rhythmus*, or measured, flowing movement of music or speech, governed by patterns of time, accent, and proportion, communicated by prosody [*Prosodie*].⁷⁸ In the late eighteenth century, Koch also wrote a treatment on metrical feet in music in his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (volume III, 1793).⁷⁹ From a rhetorical standpoint, such prosodic patterns mark the first level at which inner feeling is coupled to outward speech: the way accents link and flow gives words a certain internal “emotional inertia,” a momentum that carries them through time. The continuity of flow of such accents in speech, according to writers like Walker and Burgh in their description of the various passions, also gives a sense of lightness or heaviness on words. For example, Walker describes fear: “the sentences are short, and the meaning confused and incoherent.”⁸⁰ Here, a discontinuity in the rhythmic flow would be expected. Thus, musical intuitions about rhythm are arguably based upon oratorical training. In this view, words and syllables can be rendered distinct with articulation and laying the “correct” emphasis will bring out the sense of the subject.

As reported by various eighteenth-century writers, in spoken declamation, every word has an emphatic syllable, which takes a stress: this is *accent*. Thomas Sheridan specifies that “one syllable should have a greater stress laid on it than others; and the only difference is in laying the stress of the vowel or the consonant, which is of course acquired by natives.”⁸¹ For Sheridan, accent is made firstly by agogics, and secondly by force: “either by dwelling longer upon one syllable than the rest; or, by giving it a smarter percussion of the voice in utterance.”⁸² When carefully arranged within a rhythmic

⁷⁶ Anselm Bayly. *The alliance of musick, poetry and oratory. Under the head of poetry is considered the alliance and nature of the epic and dramatic poem, as it exists in the Iliad, Æneid and Paradise Lost. By Anselm Bayly, ...* (London: printed for John Stockdale, 1789), p. 80.

⁷⁷ Bayly. *The alliance of musick, poetry and oratory*, p. 80.

⁷⁸ Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 6, §1; trans. Ernest C. Harris, p. 344.

⁷⁹ Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, vol. 4, ch. 1, §8–16; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, pp.66–78.

⁸⁰ Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 328.

⁸¹ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 61.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

structure, Walker relates that important or “empathic” words are given greater force, creating “light and shade, which is necessary to form a strong picture of the thought.”⁸³

Furthermore, prosody contributes to the clarity of speech. In music, Mattheson notes that correct accent in melody is just like correct pronunciation of words, which contributes to its clarity.⁸⁴ Emphasizing the wrong syllable of words in speech, or the wrong parts of a melody in accordance to the metre in music, could obfuscate the meaning of the delivery and produce imprecise or contrary effects, as the listener’s attention will be drawn away from the important words or melodic segments. At the same time, misplaced accent also could misalign the external distribution of stress with the internal ordering of feeling, weakening the coupling between inward passion and outward sign and making delivery sound either unduly laboured or strangely weightless, producing a sense of awkwardness or flippancy respectively.

The next property, rhetorical *emphasis*, works on top of the scaffolding provided by accent. As Walker writes, in “every assemblage of ideas [...] some will appear more worthy of notice than others,”⁸⁵ and it is the task of the orator to mark this importance through delivery. In speech, emphasis is achieved through some combination of vocal stress, inflection, and timing, and often involves deemphasizing connecting words like prepositions and articles while “musically” lengthening the most important words. Similarly, Austin and Blair note that every sentence contains “capital”⁸⁶ or “predominant”⁸⁷ words, which must be carefully placed and stressed for both clarity and strength. According to Sheridan, emphasis is different from mere accent, for “accent addresses itself to the ear only; emphasis, through the ear, to the understanding.”⁸⁸ In this way, where accent establishes the underlying pattern that guarantees basic clarity, emphasis operates as a higher-order process. Emphasis gives the orator the ability to foreground and background certain principal parts of a speech, highlighting the important elements of a discourse to audiences. In this sense, the external features of emphasis—extra force, agogic stretching, or inflection—are the audible traces of emotional inertia: the points where an already-mobilized sentiment is locally concentrated on key words or images, giving them a heightened, passionate colouring that stands out vividly against the underlying metrical pattern. In many cases, this is likely when and how *hypotyposis* works in practice.

In this view, emphasis accent, and metre work within an overall beat hierarchy. Accent belongs to regular prosody; emphasis operates on a higher tier, foregrounding and backgrounding elements within that metrical grid. Thus, in a line of iambic pentameter, the basic unstressed–stressed pattern

⁸³ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 99.

⁸⁴ Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 5, §94; trans. Ernest C. Harris, p. 344.

⁸⁵ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 101.

⁸⁶ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 277.

⁸⁷ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 49.

⁸⁸ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 71.

may be intact, yet the orator can still throw extra weight on a single syllable. For example, (the stressed syllables in the iambs are capitalized for illustration):

The CUR | few TOLLS | the KNELL | of PAR | ting DAY

While each of the 5 iambs takes an unstressed-stressed rhythm, an orator would not necessarily pronounce each foot with equal stress. If an orator placed more force on the syllable “cur” in the word “curfew” in a way that exceeded the regular accent of the other feet, they would be placing a rhetorical emphasis on “curfew” pulling it out of the metrical frame as the semantic centre.

Sheridan notes that emphasis can be produced in two principal ways: by dwelling longer on a syllable (agogic lengthening) or by giving it a sharper “percussion” of the voice. For Sheridan, rhythmic accent — and likewise emphasis — can be acquired in one of two ways: “either by dwelling longer upon one syllable than the rest; or, by giving it a smarter percussion of the voice in utterance.”⁸⁹ He illustrates this through a quote from Shakespeare; namely, Hamlet’s famous advice to the players:

‘Speak the speech, I pray you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as some of our actors do, I had as lieve the town crier spoke my lines.’ By ‘trippingly on the tongue,’ he means the bounding from accent to accent; tripping along from word to word without resting on syllables by the way. And by mouthing, is meant, dwelling on syllables that have no accent, and ought there to be uttered as quickly as is consistent with distinct articulation; or prolonging the sounds of the accented syllables beyond their due proportion of time.⁹⁰

Sheridan underscores that rhythm and rhetorical clarity depend not only on what is said, but on how it is said. “Trippingly,” Sheridan explains, means bounding lightly from accent to accent—keeping the flow of speech moving—whereas “mouthing” is lingering on syllables that have no accent, or prolonging accented ones beyond their due proportion. The former preserves the natural flow of thought and emphasis; the latter flattens the hierarchy of importance, producing a stilted manner that Hamlet despises. This proportion of moving and lingering, in the aesthetics of sensibility, is regulated by a good taste.

Similarly, describing a performance of Nivelle de la Chaussée’s *Mélanide* in Hamburg in 1767, Lessing praises an actress, Madame Löwen, who used agogic accent and *tempo rubato* to create rhetorical emphasis in her declamation.⁹¹ Lessing offers a vivid account of Madame Löwen’s declamation to illustrate how musical qualities shape expressive speech. He praises her for combining “the silver tones of the most lovely, sonorous voice” with “the most open, peaceful, and at the same time most expressive face,” animated by “the finest, quickest emotions” and “the surest, warmest

⁸⁹ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 55.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 68.

⁹¹ For further reading, see Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 8: 26 May 1767, §8.

sentiment.”⁹² Her accentuation is “correctly, but not too markedly” applied, avoiding the dull monotony that results from a complete absence of emphasis while using it sparingly with refined taste.⁹³ Lessing then draws a clear analogy between music and spoken delivery. He suggests that if a passage of many lines is like a piece of music, with lines as bars, then even lines of identical length and syllable count should not be the same length. Instead, the voice should “slip over” less significant lines lightly and quickly, while it “lingers over the more substantive ones,” elongating and sharpening them so that “each word, and each letter in each word, counts.”⁹⁴ This creates a dynamic, constantly shifting tempo—a kind of spoken *rubato*—where pacing adjusts to the expressive weight of the thought, mirroring the musical technique of agogic nuance that stretches or compresses time to highlight important notes. Lessing insists this subtle variation “does not allow itself to be fixed by any artificial divisions of time” yet remains perceptible even to “the most unskilled of ears,” provided the delivery “flows from a heart penetrated with feeling” rather than mere memorized rote recitation.⁹⁵ Technique becomes second nature. Inner feeling expresses itself outwardly as emotional inertia, but within a frame, and thus the coupling is direct and responsive. This is what he calls a tasteful “natural music” in speech.

Türk transfers these same principles into keyboard performance in his *Clavierschule* (1789):

Whoever would read a poem and the like in such a way that it becomes comprehensible to the listener must place a marked emphasis on certain words or syllables. The very same resource is also at the disposal of the practicing musician.⁹⁶

In music, emphasis foregrounds salient elements to the listener, but it operates within (and sometimes against) the metrical accent structure. Rhythmic metre and beat hierarchy provide the regular prosodic scaffolding; rhetorical emphasis is in this view, a higher-order shaping, guided by imagination and taste. Composers could pre-inscribe likely points of emphasis—placing crucial tones on strong beats, intensifying them through dissonance, register, dynamics, or symbols—but the final calibration of “how much” and “in what way” rests with the performer’s “genius.”

How, then, would the rhetorical performer decide which “words” in the musical sentence should bear emphasis? Period writers often offer both general principles and concrete rules to train judgment and taste. For instance, Riepel notes that appoggiaturas are natural candidates for emphasis: the “violinist gave the small appoggiatura notes strong expression with his bow, but he let go of them after the attack and played all the rest of the notes quite delicately.”⁹⁷ Hence, the dissonance is attacked

⁹² Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 8: 26 May 1767, §8.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 324.

⁹⁷ Riepel, *Joseph Riepel's Theory of Metric and Tonal Order*, p. 342.

and momentarily dwelt upon; the passing notes are dispatched “trippingly,” exactly as Sheridan advises in speech.

Türk develops a more systematic account.⁹⁸ Namely:

the orator not only lays more emphasis on important syllables and the like, but he also lingers upon them a little. But this kind of lingering when it occurs in music, cannot, of course, always be of the same duration, for it appears to me to depend primarily on (1) the greater or lesser importance of the note, (2) the length and relationship to other notes, and (3) the harmony which is basic to them⁹⁹

Accordingly, Türk proposes three broad rules for identifying tones that merit emphatic weight, as summarized below:

Table 3. Summary of Türk’s categories of emphasis.

Category	Description
Metrical position	Notes on strong beats or structurally important parts of the measure—combined with the general “good/bad bar” hierarchy—naturally invite emphasis.
Phrase structure	Initial tones of sections and phrase-members should often be marked more strongly, so that the outlines of musical sentences become audible.
Expressive salience	Additional candidates include ornamented tones (especially appoggiaturas and trills on dissonances), syncopations, non-diatonic or chromatic notes, tones distinguished by unusual length or register, and structurally important harmonic intervals.

Metrical position includes those tones which fall on a strong beat or an important part of the measure.¹⁰⁰ This also includes the general accent that arrives from beat hierarchy—good and bad bars. Phrase structure plays a role too, as the player should emphasize the beginning tones of sections of a composition and phrase members.¹⁰¹ This allows musical sentences to be marked more clearly and made distinguishable. Lastly, expressive salience demands emphasis. Various other tones stressed include (and are indicated in the figure below): (a) ornamented notes (appoggiaturas, trills, etc. especially on dissonant intervals), (b) syncopated notes, (c) tones falling on non-diatonic intervals outside of the key, making sure that expressive dissonance are rendered saliently, (d) tones distinguished by length,

⁹⁸ See Türk, “Part Two: Concerning the Clarity of Execution”, *School of Clavier Playing*, pp. 324–36.

⁹⁹ For further examples on how long to linger on certain notes, see Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*., p. 327.

¹⁰⁰ Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 324.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

highness, and lowness, highlighting the contours of melody (e) important intervals based on harmony, (f) and other examples, shown below.¹⁰²



Musical Example 11. Türk's examples of stressed tones¹⁰³

Such notes could be emphasized either agogically (rhythmic modification) or dynamically (sharper attack), or with both, arguably depending on *telos* and *kairos*. In this view, they function as the musical equivalents of Blair's "capital words." For the rhetorical performer, these prescriptions are arguably not a mechanical checklist but a training in how to couple inner feeling to outward expression. Analysis and taste could first identify which tones carry the main conceptual and affective weight; imagination then would clothe them with the appropriate degree of emotional inertia and determines the appropriate kind of emphasis, while letting less important material flow "trippingly off the tongue" lightly. When this hierarchy is well judged, the listener would presumably hear not a flat sequence of equally weighted notes, but a hierarchy in which certain sounds stand forward, others recede, and the flow of time itself seems to dilate or contract in accordance with the sentiments being expressed.

7.3.6 Example Musical Case Studies

The following two examples illustrate how different cadence types and their associated "punctuation" function in real pieces, using the vocabulary drawn from Table 2. These examples combine the framework proposed above with my own artistic interpretation of these works. This introduces artistic subjectivity into the discourse, which will always be signposted by the first-person voice. In the musical examples below, thick arrows show the approximate melodic "vocal" inflection at the cadence, while punctuation marks are in boxes.

The first example in Musical Example 12. Allegro from J.C. Bach's Sonata in B flat major, Op. 5, exemplifies the *style coupé*. Here the phrases are short, neatly cut, and follow one another in quick succession, which I believe lends the Allegro a comic, gay lightness and a charming, almost conversational character. The majority of cadences are conclusive *clausulae perfectissimae* ((5) – (1) many with (7) – (1)), but because they arrive so frequently, they could function more like a chain of

¹⁰² Türk, *School of Clavier Playing*, p. 326.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

small propositions than a single grand period: only the final cadence of the section truly feels like a “full conclusion” to the discourse. However, the calming sentiment presented at the beginning is affirmed by tonic commas (④ – ③) in bars 9–10 and 11–12. In b. 22, the cadence is deliberately averted, the bass resolving from ⑤ – ③ rather than ⑤–①, so that the predicate remains incomplete and the listener’s expectation is held in suspense. In b. 14, Bach uses a changing comma to modulate to F major, introducing the playful second subject. For the performer, these commas and incomplete closes signal points where the affect should momentarily relax or turn but not fully come to rest—a pattern of light “question and answer” that suits the piece’s witty tone.

2

SONATA I

Allegretto

The image shows a musical score for Sonata I, Allegretto. It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The score is annotated with various symbols and boxes. Arrows point to specific notes or groups of notes. There are several rectangular boxes highlighting certain measures or groups of measures. Some boxes contain a semicolon (;) or a comma (,). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The time signature is 2/4.

Musical Example 12. Allegro from J.C. Bach’s Sonata in B flat major, Op. 5 No. 1. Welcker, n.d. [1765], p. 2.

The second example below, Musical Example 13. Adagio from Mozart, Sonata in D major K. 576 (1789), is written in the *style périodique*, which immediately raises the expressive register. I believe that the character is more serious and noble, even as it depicts a heart fluttering with sighing, innocent, timid love. Below, the cadences are labelled with their inflection and punctuation function. A performer who recognises these as graded resting points—some minor, some more consequential—can adjust the length and intensity of pauses accordingly, letting inner feeling follow the structural “breath” of the sentence, fluttering upwards wistfully and settling into repose. They are all formed by a *clausula altizans* (④ – ③); accordingly, they are heard as soft assurances rather than final closes. The “changing comma” in b. 4 and 12, which are half closes, are stronger than commas, but remain incomplete, as they articulate higher-level structural divisions and can be likened to semicolons. The divisions between 9

and 10, and 10 and 11, are caesuras: they separate these one-bar members but are the lowest-order division. Lastly, with bar 8 and 16 have complete closes ((5) – (1) bass clausulae), and each denotes the “period” of a complete musical thought. These are the points at which the performer may allow both sound and sentiment to come properly to rest before beginning a new “paragraph” where a completely contrasting feeling emerges.

For the rhetorical performer, such identification becomes more than analytical exercise; it becomes a guide to embodied delivery. Recognising cadence types clarifies the grammatical structure of the music on a small scale; combined with rules of emphasis from authors like Türk, it shows where one may breathe, complete a thought, press forward, or deliberately suspend expectation. It also allows the performer to divide the piece into distinct sentiments and their transitions, so that inner feeling can be steered along the pathways provided by the structure instead of drifting arbitrarily. Moreover, the choice between a more “cut” *Style Coupé* and a more “arched” *Style Périodique* offers the player a sense of the prevailing rhetorical mode of a musical “paragraph”—whether expression should sparkle in short, animated bursts or unfold in long, swelling periods.

Adagio^o

5

9

12

16

Musical Example 13. Adagio from Mozart, Sonata in D major K. 576. NMA IX/25/2, p. 154.

7.4 Larger-Scale Disposition: Models of Form

7.4.1 Classical Structure of an Oration

In classical rhetoric, *dispositio* gives the speaker a roadmap for delivery. The ordered parts of an oration tell the orator when to win goodwill, when to inform, when to attack or defend, and when to move the audience most powerfully. In the model defined by Quintilian:¹⁰⁴

1. *Prooimion* or *exordium*: the introduction or prologue, *prooemium*. Cicero notes that this is “a passage which brings the mind of the auditor into a proper condition to receive the rest of the speech” accomplished if they are made “well-disposed, attentive, and receptive.”¹⁰⁵ It is often divided into two parts: firstly, an “introduction” which “directly and in plain language makes the auditor well-disposed, receptive, and attentive,” and secondly, an “insinuation” which “by dissimulation and indirection unobtrusively steals into the mind of the auditor.”¹⁰⁶
2. *Narratio*: narration, statement of facts. For Cicero, this is “an exposition of events that have occurred or are supposed to have occurred.”¹⁰⁷ Quintilian notes that it is a “is a preparation for the proofs”¹⁰⁸ and establishes the background for a case.
3. *Confirmatio*, *Probatio*: proofs, i.e., arguments to support a proposition. This is sometimes divided into two parts:
 - a. *Propositio*: Proposition. The main proposition itself. As Quintilian notes, one must “propose what you are going to prove.”¹⁰⁹
 - b. *Partitio*: Partition. According to Cicero, it “renders the whole speech clear and perspicuous”¹¹⁰ by dividing the main proposition into parts, outlining the main arguments.
4. *Refutatio*: rebuttal against counterarguments. Cicero notes these are “arguments are used to impair, disprove, or weaken the confirmation or proof in our opponents’ speech.”¹¹¹
5. *Digressio*: (optional section) Digression. As Cicero notes, the orator digresses to a seemingly unrelated topic, and “thinks a passage should be introduced unconnected with the case and the

¹⁰⁴ For further reading, see Quintilian. *The Orator’s Education*, 3.9.1.

¹⁰⁵ Cicero. *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰⁸ Quintilian. *The Orator’s Education*, 3.9.7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 3.9.2.

¹¹⁰ Cicero. *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, p. 63.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 123.

actual point to be decided”¹¹² potentially in order to orient the audience towards some aspect of the main subject.

6. *Peroratio*: conclusion, or epilogue. As Cicero notes, it comes in three parts: “the summing-up, the *indignatio* or exciting of indignation or ill-will against the opponent, and the *conquestio* or the arousing of pity and sympathy.”¹¹³ The *conquestio* serves as a last, poignant, appeal to the emotions, as Cicero describes “seeking to arouse the pity of the audience.” It can also be “delivered gravely and sententiously,” arousing sympathy, for “the spirit of man is greatly abased and prepared for pity, for in viewing the misfortune of another he will contemplate his own weakness.”¹¹⁴

Each part therefore has a distinct emotional and cognitive function for the audience: the exordium softens resistance and opens receptivity; the *narratio* orients understanding of the “case”; the *confirmatio* and *refutatio* manage belief and doubt; and the *peroratio* gathers and heightens passion, sending the audience away in an elevated state. For an orator trained in embodied delivery, this structure is a sequence of roles for the body and voice: when to be restrained and insinuating, when to grow warm and insistent, and when to drive a point home. As will be argued below, eighteenth-century thought often viewed this systematization as a flexible template not just for speeches and sermons, but for essays, tragedies, and other artworks (including musical) whose aim was to lead the audience through an ordered progression of sentiments.

7.4.2 The Structure of a Musical Oration

Modern musical pedagogy often approaches large-scale form as if it were a fixed technical mould; in contrast, eighteenth-century writers more often treated it as the *dispositio* of a musical oration whose structure is inseparable from its delivery. Mainstream nineteenth-century theory—especially models drawn from Marx’s codification of sonata form in *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition* (1845)—presents first movements of sonatas, symphonies, and quartets as tripartite designs of exposition, development, and recapitulation.¹¹⁵ These analytical characteristics are often portrayed with relatively rigid tonal expectations (tonic–dominant–tonic, etc.). While invaluable for later pedagogy, this backward projection into 1740–1830 tends to arguably “box in” earlier music as if composers were filling pre-cut modules, and it does little to guide a performer who must decide how to deliver the music rhetorically.

¹¹² Cicero. *On Invention. The Best Kind of Orator. Topics*, p. 148.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 157–58.

¹¹⁵ See for example, James Webster, “Sonata form”, *Grove Music Online*. 2001; Accessed 25 Nov. 2025. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/display/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000026197>.

By contrast, theorists such as Mattheson, Koch, Kirnberger, Galeazzi, and Forkel understood musical form as a persuasive *Klangrede*: a musical discourse shaped by classical *dispositio*. A main subject or *Hauptsatz* is proposed, elaborated, supported, challenged, and ultimately affirmed or transformed. Form, in this view, is not a neutral container but the ordered path along which sentiments are to be felt and expressed. A performer who recognises where a movement introduces, argues, digresses, refutes, or concludes could align inner feeling with these functions instead of merely “getting through” the notes.

As Bonds notes, while Mattheson “was by no means the first to comment on the parallels between rhetoric and musical composition,” he was among the first to develop a full theory of composition within a rhetorical framework.¹¹⁶ Bonds demonstrates how Riepel and Koch then show how such discourse is built up from small units (incises, clauses, sentences) into larger paragraphs and sections; but this micro-periodicity is always in the service of higher-order rhetorical aims. Bonds notes that Mattheson “recognized the limitations of explaining form solely through the concept of periodicity” and instead sought to bridge this gap using classical rhetoric’s methodology.¹¹⁷ In *Kern Melodischer Wissenschaft* (1737) and *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), Mattheson drew direct analogies between musical form and oration, arguing that a composer, like an orator, must invent and properly dispose their ideas to guide the listener’s emotional experience. He famously analyzed an aria by Benedetto Marcello (now lost), describing its sections in classical rhetorical terms such as propositions, proofs, and refutations, treating even instrumental music as structured discourse.¹¹⁸ Mattheson’s influential view presented music as a form of rhetorical argument capable of moving, persuading, and delighting listeners through ordered sections and varied affects.

Within this model, the classical parts of an oration suggest corresponding musical functions that are directly relevant to delivery. An exordium may be realised as a prelude or slow introduction that brings the listener’s mind into a “proper condition” to receive what follows. For example, Beethoven’s *Pathétique* Sonata, Op. 13, famously begins with a solemn *Grave* that does not yet present the stormy *Hauptsatz* of the *Allegro di molto e con brio*, but prepares the imaginative space: the listener feels the weight and “grave” terror before the full outbreak of dismay and anger. In this view, the *Grave* could function like a spoken exordium: an opportunity to establish the atmosphere of feeling, colour, and weight, so that the later *Allegro* can erupt as a natural intensification rather than an arbitrary, unprompted outburst.

The same sonata closes with a passage that could arguably function as *peroration*. Taking this perspective, material recalling the affective world of the exordium is restated and intensified into a final

¹¹⁶ Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 84.

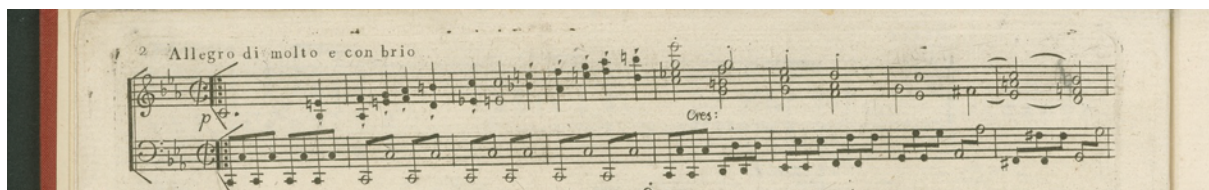
¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹¹⁸ See “Von den Ab- und Einschnitten der Klangrede”, Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 9, §1–76; “On the Sections and Caesuras of Musical Rhetoric”, trans. Ernest C. Harris, pp. 380–404.

conquestio, a last appeal to pity, moving from exclamatory outburst into exhausted grief. Here, a rhetorical performer might recognise a closing appeal: inner agitation must reach its highest pitch and then subside into solemn reflection, mirroring Cicero's account of peroration as where the orator seeks "to arouse the pity of the audience;" as a result, it is "delivered gravely and sententiously."¹¹⁹



Musical Example 14. Grave from Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata in c minor, No. 8, Op. 13. BHB Inv.-Nr. 57.013, p. 3.



Musical Example 15. Allegro section of Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata in c minor, No. 8, Op. 13. BHB Inv.-Nr. 57.013, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ Cicero, *De Inventione*, pp. 157–58.

sustain the listener's engagement with the sentimental narrative, fulfilling the expectation that music should, in Kirnberger's words, "engage the listener for a period of time in the same emotional state."

Forkel adopts this approach in his writings about musical rhetoric. He lists, within large instrumental forms such as sonata, symphony, and concerto, the following structural elements:

1. Exordium
2. Thema or main proposition (*Hauptsatz*)
3. Secondary ideas (*Nebensätze*)
4. Contrasting ideas (*Gegensätze*)
5. Partitions of ideas (*Zergliederungen*)
6. Refutations (*Widerlegungen*)
7. Affirmations (*Bekräftigungen*)
8. Conclusion. [Peroration]¹²²

Forkel also argues that:

The arrangement of musical ideas and the progression of emotions expressed by them, so that they are presented to our heart in a certain context, just like the ideas of a speech are presented to our mind following logical principles, is thus an essential feature of the musical rhetoric and musical aesthetics.¹²³

For Forkel, form is therefore an emotional logic: the *Hauptempfindung* (main sentiment) must be surrounded and tested by auxiliary, dissected, and opposing sentiments, yet in an order that mirrors natural psychological development. Here, feelings grow, wither, and rise again little by little. For example, indignation may evolve into anger, revenge, or eventually calm contentment, but it cannot leap abruptly from one state to another. Each emotion has its own integrity and resists being abruptly replaced. To dissolve an emotion, a musician must gradually weaken it and lead it to its dissolution, imitating nature's patient transitions.¹²⁴

These insights underpin Forkel's framework for structuring a piece:

1. A dominant main sentiment (*Hauptempfindung*),
2. Auxiliary or related sentiments (*Nebenempfindungen*),
3. Dissected or partitioned sentiments (*aufgelöste Empfindungen*),

¹²² See Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p.122.

¹²³ Die Anordnung musikalischer Gedanken, und die Fortschreitung der durch sie ausgedrückten Empfindungen, so daß sie unserm Herzen in einem gewissen Zusammenhange beygebracht werden, wie die in einer Rede enthaltenen, nach logischen Grundsätzen auf einander folgenden Ideen unserm Geiste, ist daher ein Hauptpunkt in der musikalischen Rhetorik und Aesthetik. Johann Nikolaus Forkel, „Über eine Sonate aus Carl Phil. Emanuel Bachs dritter Sonatensammlung für Kenner und Liebhaber, in F moll, S. 30. Ein Sendschreiben an Hrn. von * *“, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland auf das Jahr 1784* (Leipzig: Schwickert, 1783), pp. 31–32.

¹²⁴ Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, p. 31.

4. Opposing or contradictory sentiments (*widersprechende und entgegengesetzte Empfindungen*).¹²⁵

These elements correspond to the parts of a rhetorical discourse (proposition, supporting arguments, analysis, objections). For the rhetorical performer, this could mean that large-scale form is not an abstract skeleton but a map of how inner feeling ought to rise, stall, clash, and subside. The *Hauptsatz* serves as the main proposition or central affect, while *Zwischengedanken* signal where that affect is to be reinforced, dissected, or challenged; opposing sentiments mark places where the performer must register genuine internal conflict rather than merely switch to a new “character.” When understood in this way, *dispositio* becomes a practical tool for coupling: each structural division tells the performer not only what comes next, but how their sensibility should be prepared to move.

7.4.3 Genre and Form

To many eighteenth-century writers, form was never a free-floating abstraction: it was always filtered through genre and style. In the rhetorical perspective, genre sets the horizon of what kinds of sentiments are appropriate, how far they may range, and in what order they may plausibly appear. Style supplies the conventionalized vocabulary of *topoi* with which those sentiments are made communicable. Together, they narrow the broad field of possible affects into a more focused “sentimental constellation” for a given work.

As Bonds notes, “to eighteenth-century theorists and aestheticians, the form of a work, be it an oration or a musical composition, is strongly influenced by the genre to which it belongs.”¹²⁶ Arguably, this is simply taste and decorum applied structurally: just as a funeral oration, a legal defence, and a panegyric invite different mixtures and sequences of passions, so too do a pastoral rondeau, a funereal march movement, or a heroic sonata. Rhetorical logic of theme and disposition also establishes the concept of genre. Mattheson had already noted this in *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739), establishing that certain ordering of periods suited different vocal and instrumental genres, as well as dance forms.¹²⁷ Following from this trajectory, various other writers like Schubart in his *Ideen* (written 1770–80s, published 1806)¹²⁸ and Koch give a similar treatment on the different musical genres.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ 1) eine Hauptempfindung,

2) ähnliche Nebenempfindungen,

3) zergliederte, das heißt, in einzelne Theile aufgelöste Empfindungen,

4) widersprechende und entgegengesetzte Empfindungen

Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, pp. 31–32.

¹²⁶ Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 118.

¹²⁷ See “Von den Gattungen der Melodien und ihren besondern Abzeichen”, Mattheson, *Der vollkommene Capellmeister*, Part II, ch. 13, §1–43; “On the Categories of Melodies and Their Special Characteristics”, trans. Ernest C. Harris, pp. 430–68.

¹²⁸ See several sections from Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*; „Von musikalischen Styl“, pp. 343–53; „Von Kammerstyl“, pp. 354–355; „Von den musikalischen Kunstwörtern“, pp. 356–362.

¹²⁹ See, for example, Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, Vol. III (1793), ch. 2, §17–23 (pp.78–85 in trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker); Vol. III, ch. 4, §73–127; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, pp. 165–213.

Classical rhetoric demands style and decorum: the suitability of content and elaboration to occasion and audience; musically, this means that the way a *Hauptsatz* is developed—how long it is dwelt upon, how strongly it is opposed, how tenderly it is dissolved—depends on the genre’s expected affective range. Kirnberger’s remark that the “form of most of our usual current musical works has arisen: concertos, symphonies, arias, duets, trios, fugues, etc.” points to the same insight: each genre stabilises a typical appropriate pattern of sentiments and their disposition. For example, Koch quotes Sulzer in his explanation of the *sonata*, which in its solo form, is like a monologue which can inherently express a variety of very sensitive, personal passions. This can be achieved by sustaining a single sentiment or introducing a dialogue between contrasting affections. Koch notes that since the sonata depicts the emotions of single people, its melody must be exceptionally well-crafted and showcase the most delicate nuances of feeling.¹³⁰ In contrast, regarding the *concerto* as a genre, Koch writes the following:

The expression of feeling by the solo player is like a monologue, i.e. in passionate tones, in which the solo player is, as it were, communing with himself; nothing external has the slightest influence on the expression of his feeling. But consider a well-worked-out concerto in which, during the solo, the accompanying voices are not merely there to sound this or that missing interval of the chords between the soprano and bass. There is a passionate dialogue between the concerto player and the accompanying orchestra. He expresses his feelings to the orchestra, and it signals him through short interspersed phrases—sometimes approval, sometimes acceptance of his expression, as it were. Now in the allegro it tries to stimulate his noble feelings still more; now it commiserates, now it comforts him in the adagio. In short, by a concerto I imagine something similar to the tragedy of the ancients, where the actor expressed his feelings not towards the pit, but to the chorus. The chorus was involved most closely with the action and was at the same time justified in participating in the expression of feelings. Then the listener, without losing anything, is just the third person, who can take part in the passionate performance of the concerto player and the accompanying orchestra.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, Vol. III, ch. 4, §108; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, p. 203.

¹³¹ Der Ausdruck der Empfindung des Solospielers ist ein Monolog in leidenschaftlichen Tönen; der Solospieler ist dabey gleichsam in sich selbst gekehrt; nichts äußerliches hat den geringsten Einfluß auf den Ausdruck seiner Empfindung. Betrachtet man aber ein gut gearbeitetes Concert, in welchem während des Solo die begleitenden Stimmen nicht bloß da sind, um dieses oder jenes, zwischen der Oberstimme und dem Baß fehlende Intervall der Accorde anzuschlagen; so findet man eine leidenschaftliche Unterhaltung des Concertspielers mit dem ihn begleitenden Orchester; diesem trägt er seine Empfindungen vor; dieses winkt ihm durch kurze eingestreute Sätze bald Beyfall zu, bald bejahet es gleichsam seinen Ausdruck; bald sucht es im Allegro seine erhabenen Empfindungen noch mehr anzufachen; bald bedauert, bald tröstet es ihn in dem Adagio; kurz, ich stelle mir unter dem Concerte etwas ähnliches mit der Tragödie der Alten vor, wo der Schauspieler seine Empfindungen nicht gegen das Parterre, sondern gegen den Chor äußerte, und dieser hingegen auf das genaueste mit in die Handlung verflochten, und zugleich berechtiget war, an dem Ausdrücke der Empfindungen Antheil zu haben. Alsdenn aber ist der Zuhörer, jedoch ohne etwas dabey zu verlieren, erst die dritte Person, die an dem leidenschaftlichen Vortrage des Concertspielers an das ihn begleitende Orchester Theil nehmen kann. Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, Vol. III, ch. 4, §119; trans. Nancy Kovaleff Baker, p. 209.

Here, Koch proposes that genre determines how musical “propositions” are aesthetically ordered and perceived in performance. A solo piece can unfold like a monologue: the player shapes a continuous rhetorical line whose expressive logic is largely self-contained. In a concerto, by contrast, that ordering is inherently dialogic. Musical ideas are not simply stated and developed by one voice, but are answered, affirmed, provoked, consoled—their meaning emerging through exchange, interruption, and response between soloist and orchestra. Koch then analogizes concerto to theatrical tragedy. By likening the orchestra to the ancient chorus, he frames the concerto as staged action: the soloist plays to an involved partner that both participates in and regulates expression, while the listener overhears as a “third person.” Read this way, the passage is an invitation to explore concerto drama with an actor’s mindset.

In this view, genre does not merely prescribe a layout of sections; it focuses the emotional work that a given form is meant to do. A set of variations, for example, typically narrows its entire expressive universe around a single *Hauptsatz*. Georg Joseph Vogler, who often wrote complex, innovative, variation sets, noted that:

variations are a kind of musical rhetoric, in which the same idea is presented in various turns, with the difference that the limitations in music are much more precise than in verbal rhetoric ... In spite of this strict adherence to the theme, which one may never lose from one’s sight, there is, on the other hand, if one is speaking of the manner of presentation, an opening to the widest possible field.¹³²

Here, strict adherence to the theme anchors the sentimental constellation: the core subject must remain recognisable, while successive variations explore different shadings—brighter, darker, more agitated, more resigned—without breaking the bond to the original idea, or the unity of the whole. Genre, which works here with the regulatory function of taste, tells the composer and performer how far they may roam from the centre without losing it and invites the interpreter to show inner flexibility within that ring of recognisable identity.

Koch and Sulzer above suggested that a sonata could sustain and develop around a single sentiment. For example, in the *Vivace assai* of Haydn’s Keyboard Sonata in D major, Hob. XVI:42, which eludes the tidy boxes of later “sonata-form” theory, a single proposition or *Hauptsatz* is presented at the outset and the entire movement springs from this simple motive. It is manipulated, transposed, augmented, passed between voices, overlapped, pulled apart, and reassembled in a multitude of settings that may initially sound fanciful but soon reveal the work of an “enthusiastic but structured”

¹³² Veränderungen sind eine Art musikalischer Rhetorik, wo der nämliche Sinn in mancherlei Wendungen vorkömmt, mit dem Unterschiede, dass die Gränzlinien viel genauer in der Musik, als in der Redekunst bestimmt werden . . . Diesem strengen Bezug aufs Thema, den man nie aus dem Gesichte verlieren darf, unbeschadet, öffnet sich doch auf der andern Seite eine Aussicht in das weiteste Feld, wenn von der Einkleidung die Rede ist. Georg Joseph Vogler, *Verbesserung der Forkel’schen Veränderungen über das englische Volkslied God Save the King* (Frankfurt/Main: Varentrapp und Wenner, 1793), pp. 5–6; trans. Bonds, *Wordless Rhetoric*, p. 98.

master. Here the genre of the sonata invites a more exploratory, argumentative use of the theme: the same motive could be made to speak now playfully, now urgently, now assertively, showing more breadth and freedom than a typical variation set, yet still bound to one prevailing subject. In 1812, Haydn's biographer, Giuseppe Carpani, underscores Haydn's affinity to this style of writing, drawing on the familiar terminology of rhetorical *dispositio*:

A musical composition is a discourse that uses figurative sounds instead of words. The motif is the proposition, the assumption that one undertakes to prove. In the same way as the orator, after proposing his theme, develops it, adduces evidence for it, tightens the argument, and, summarising what has already been said, leads it to its conclusion; in the same way, the music teacher must progress in his work. From time to time, he returns to the motif and plays it again, so that the listener is thoroughly imbued with it. If this motif is such that it pleases the ear, it is very likely that by returning to the field, he will renew, confirm, and increase that initial pleasure. But to give the theme an air of novelty every time it is recalled, and not to be content, as mediocre minds do, with repeating it slavishly by passing it from one tone to another; but to reinvigorate it, sometimes to embellish it, to vary it, to turn it around with skill and grace, and to embellish it more and more, this is the true mark of genius. I appeal to all those who have heard Haydn's symphonies.¹³³

Carpani here affirms Haydn's rhetorical talent for developing a single proposition by "reinvigorating" it with innovative and ingenious turns.

These monothematic strategies contrast with the more typical allegro of a keyboard sonata, where several contrasting themes interact. As Koch and Sulzer noted above, a sonata-movement often distributes its sentimental constellation across several *Hauptsätze* and *Nebensätze*. In such pieces, genre prepares the listener for a more dialogic constellation. For example, a noble or urgent *Hauptsatz* may be answered by a lighter, more tender secondary idea. The sentimental narrative then depends on how these ideas are disposed: whether the first subject dominates, is softened, is challenged and overcome, or ends in uneasy coexistence. A rondo offers yet another pattern. Here the recurring refrain functions as a stable emotional base, while contrasting episodes explore more distant or coloured sentiments. The

¹³³ Una composizione musicale è un discorso che si fa coi suoni figurati in vece delle parole. Il motivo ne è la proposizione, l'assunto che s'imprende a provare. Alla stessa maniera de l'Oratore, dopo d'aver proposto il suo tema, lo sviluppa, ne adduce le prove, ne stringe l'argomento, e riepilogando il già detto, lo conduce alla conclusione; allo stesso modo progredir deve il maestro di musica nel suo lavoro. Egli di tanto in tanto ritorna al motivo e lo fa risentire, affinché l'ascoltatore ne sia ben bene penetrato. Se questo motivo è tale che rechi piacere all'orecchio, egli è ben verisimile che col tornare in campo ci rinovi, confermì ed accresca quel piacer primo. Ma il dare al tema un'aria di novità tutte le fiate che vien richiamato, e non contentarsi già, come fanno i mediocri ingegni, di ripeterlo servilmente col farlo passare da un tuono all'altro; ma rinvigorirlo, aspreggiarlo talvolta, variarlo, rivoltarlo con dottrina e con garbo, e sempre più abbellirlo, questo è il vero distintivo del genio. Ne apello a quanti udirono le sinfonie di Haydn. Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine, ovvero lettere su la vita e le opere del celebre maestro Giuseppe Haydn* (Milan: C. Boccinelli, 1812), pp. 43–44.

genre thus prescribes a play between stability and excursion: the *Hauptsatz* here would aim to be strong enough in character that each return feels like a recognizable emotional recollection.

For the rhetorical performer, knowing the genre would inform sympathetic interpretation. It tells the player not only which *topoi* are appropriate, but also what kind of inner world should be activated and how widely that world may range. Genre, in this view, limits the sentimental constellation in a productive way, preventing expression from becoming diffuse. It helps the performer keep their sensibility aligned with the work's *telos*, so that inner feeling develops along the pathways the form itself suggests. Within those limits, style provides the recognizable surface through which that sensibility can be made legible to listeners. Consequently, genre is not a constraint opposed to feeling, but the frame that guides it, allowing it to be focused and shared.

8. Rhetorical Figures

Various eighteenth-century writers viewed style in rhetoric as intimately bound up with thought itself. As Blair noted, “Style has always some reference to an author’s manner of thinking. It is a picture of the ideas which rise in his mind, and of the manner in which they rise there; and, hence, when we are examining an author’s composition, it is, in many cases, extremely difficult to separate the Style from the sentiment.”¹ Moreover, Blair posits that figurative language stems from “the imagination, or the passions,”² linking style directly to imaginative appeal. Hence, for Blair, style is the visible external trace of an inner process: a consequence of an inner movement made outwardly legible. For a rhetorical performer, stylistic delivery therefore becomes one of the main sites where coupling is critical.

From this conception emerge the rhetorical figures, which constitute the specific techniques by which outer stylistic expressiveness is achieved. Quintilian defines rhetorical figures as both a “configuration of language distinct from the common and immediately obvious form” and “an innovative form of expression produced by some artistic means.”³ Eighteenth-century writers such as Charles Rollin and John Walker followed suit, describing figures as expressive deviations from ordinary speech⁴ that add grace, force, and liveliness to discourse.⁵ Rollin compares them to the varied poses of a sculpture, which in the mode of Pygmalion, bring passion and vitality to otherwise rigid and static forms through liveliness and movement. In this view, figures should animate language especially when they are considered as sites of coupling.⁶ Here, the figures become functional tools of amplification, variation, and sentimental colouring that go beyond mere decoration. Their use was codified in ancient rhetoric and remained central to eighteenth-century discourse across the arts. In music, rhetorical figures found direct analogues: melodic and harmonic patterns designed to imitate, intensify, or clarify specific affects.

The rhetorical figures are typically classified into two main non-mutually exclusive classes: figures of *speech* and figures of *thought*. The first class includes tropes and figures of word. They were defined by Quintilian as “language transferred from its natural and principal meaning to another for the sake of embellishment.” Therefore, figures of speech primarily operate on the outward side of coupling. They create some sort of external modification that colours or intensifies them, allowing external features to more readily carry some inner motion. Words and phrases are rearranged and substituted

¹ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, pp. 217–18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 326.

³ Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 9.1.15.

⁴ Charles Rollin, *The Method of Teaching and Studying the Belles Lettres*, 6th edition, (London: 1769), Vol. II, p. 1.

⁵ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 156.

⁶ A statue, [...] quite uniform, and of a piece from top to bottom, with the head strait upon the shoulders, the arms hanging down, and the feet joined together could have no gracefulness, and would seem to be without motion, and lifeless. It is the different attitudes of the feet, the hands, the countenance, and head, which being varied an infinite number of ways, according to the diversity of subjects, communicates a sort of action and motion to the works of art, and give them, as it were, life and soul. Rollin, *The method of teaching and studying the belles lettres*, Vol. III, p. 1.

from their common un-embellished form to create rhetorical effects. This includes various figures such as metaphor, metonymy, antonomasia, metalepsis, synecdoche, catachresis, allegory, onomatopoeia, and often, hyperbole.⁷ Musical ornamentation arguably functions analogously, as typologies of more complex ornamental patterns replace more simplistic melodic forms. Taking cues from rhetorical theorists, some eighteenth-century music theorists, like Johann Adolf Scheibe, classified ornaments like trills, turns, appoggiaturas, mordants, etc. as *figurae simplices*: a class of rhetorical trope. As Bartel underscores, “in comparing tropes to embellishments, Scheibe wishes to equate the unadorned melody with the unadorned thoughts or words of a sentence.”⁸ Hence, “the ornamental note’s “literal meaning” is understood as representing another note. Just as the trope uses words symbolically, so too is a musical ornament based on a note or phrase which itself remains only implied.”⁹ Regardless, “the underlying notes or words, melodies or thoughts, should always remain tacitly yet essentially understood, in spite of their embellishments.”¹⁰

The second class, *figures of thought*, act more from the inner side of coupling. They convey the orator’s inner conception—encompassing not only emotional states but also intentions, attitudes, and shifts in perspective—and may involve combinations of speech figures, literal meanings used figuratively, or even modes of delivery. Examples include interrogation, exclamation, apostrophe, ellipsis, and antithesis. Unlike figures of speech, which primarily work through external features, figures of thought operate at the level of the speaker’s and audience’s own mental and emotional processes. This is often mobilized with some sort of coupling to an outward expression. In this way, figures of thought orient and prompt listeners to arrive at a certain mode of thought or feeling. For example, a rhetorical question, recruits the listener to infer an answer even when none is given. An antithesis has an orator couple opposing stances, where delivery makes the opposition legibly stark. It aims to push the audience to experience the tension between the two poles, and this often forces them to choose some sort of relation between them.

From the perspective of the rhetorical framework, neither figures of speech nor thought are mere external stylistic forms manipulated mechanically with affective disinterest. In contrast, their effectiveness relies on sentimental associations that sympathetically resonate with the imagination of both speaker and listener. For example, a metaphor proposes a strong relationality between a certain (possibly inert) concept, and another sentimentally charged one, such that the sentiments transfer from one to the other along this linkage. An exclamation exhibits a strong discharge of passion that arguably must come from the inside out to be convincing. When well-delivered, the figures could enable the

⁷ Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 9.1.5.

⁸ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 152.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

audience to experience the orator's inner thoughts and feelings; in effect, the orator uses the figures to "take possession" of the audience's mental process.

According to various eighteenth-century writers, musical rhetorical figures—like their verbal counterparts—served as powerful means of making an inner world legible to others. At times they concentrate, amplify, and intensify an affect in sound. Yet, as Forkel suggests, once such figures are ordered into a discourse, they do more than colour individual moments: they appear as natural valves and releases that regulate how expressive energy is gathered, directed, and discharged across a narrative. Firstly, Forkel argues that the outward shape of musical figures arises from the way they appear in nature: i.e., the natural signs of the passions. Moreover, he notes that in nature feelings follow courses of action that parallel what the figures themselves express. Sentiments can surge and collapse (*ellipsis*), show hesitation (*dubitatio*), repeat or amplify (*repetitio*), fragment or contradict themselves (*distributio* and *antithesis*), digress and return (*digression*, *epistrophe*), or build gradually in intensity (*gradatio*).¹¹ These emotional patterns, he proposes, are not artificial impositions but empirical reflections of how sentiment actually outwardly unfolds. For Forkel, musical figures, like their rhetorical counterparts, serve to structure and communicate feeling convincingly, demonstrating that music operates as a language of sentiments grounded in the natural signs.¹² In this way, figures describe the recurrent external shapes of inner motion as much as outer design: they are the recurring "gestures" of sensibility itself, captured outwardly in sound.

From this perspective, the technical Latin nomenclature rhetorical figures provided is merely the craft-language of the initiated. While described in treatises by Mattheson, Scheibe, Forkel, and others, this terminology simply names what any sensitive listener or performer may already perceive as natural swellings and contractions of feeling. Regardless, such terminology declines across the nineteenth century—especially in widely circulated tutors aimed at the burgeoning amateur market—yet the figures themselves arguably persist because they are grounded in sentiment itself. In this view, what could be more natural than an exclamation (*exclamatio*)—a sudden, emphatic cry—or an ellipsis—the breaking-off of a phrase mid-thought? A listener might hear the former in the eruptive *sforzando* outbursts and wide-leaping accents of Beethoven's *Appassionata*, and the latter in Schumann's *Kreisleriana*, where phrases repeatedly halt, suspend, or restart as if catching their breath. Romanticism's public rhetoric of instinct and anti-formalism helps explain the retreat from taxonomic

¹¹ Unsere Empfindungen äussern sich auf so mannichfaltige Weise — steigen z. B. bisweilen mit Heftigkeit bis zu einem gewissen Punkte hinauf, und brechen sodann auf einmal ab — oder äußern eine gewisse Ungewißheit, einen Zweifel in ihrem Ausdruck — oder wiederholen sich — oder verstärken sich oder lösen sich in einzelne Theile auf — machen sich gleichsam selbst Einwürfe, werfen sich Hinderungen in den Weg — gehen durch viele Umschweife fort — kehren wieder zurück, ohne wieder vorwärts zu gehen — steigen stufenweise von der schwächern zur stärkern Aeüßerung fort rc. Sind dieß nicht lauter Ausdrücke, die den Ausdrücken der Ellipsis, der Dubitation, der Repetition, der Paronomasia, der Distribution, der Antithese, der Suspension, der Epistrophe, der Gradation rc. ähnlich sind? Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, p. 32.

¹² Ibid.

terminologies; formal “prescription” was out of fashion. Nevertheless, as earlier theorists already suggested, these figures are in a sense self-evident and empirical: they name patterns of expressive behaviour that arise from the body and voice of feeling itself. For a modern rhetorical performer, recovering the vocabulary is less about reviving an old taxonomy than about making conscious what sensibility already half-knows: that certain shapes of phrase, accent, or harmony are exclamations, questions, digressions, or broken-off thoughts, and must be inhabited as such.

For the purposes of the present study, defining and naming such figures remains useful—not to impose a rigid system, but to provide a shared vocabulary for recognising, discussing, and deliberately shaping expressive strategies that are already latent in the music. A rhetorical performer could be well-served by habitually identifying them, so that these moments of heightened expression are neither overlooked, nor under-delivered or treated generically but receive a delivery proportionate to their function. Furthermore, the typical nomenclature could prove useful for performers as a compact “toolbox” of labels, allowing them to communicate quickly about concrete devices in rehearsal and pedagogy and to coordinate expressive intentions with other musicians.

For many elocutionists of the period, seeking to help shape the expression of students, rhetorical figures are often given a prescription for embodied delivery. Blair wrote that the figures were “not only enunciated to others, but enunciated, in a particular manner,” which is “designed to render the impression more strong and vivid.”¹³ Wentz underscores this point in his study of historical acting techniques: “rhetorical figures had to be performed rhetorically, with vocal inflexions, accompanied by physical gestures, that correspond their meaning.”¹⁴ Walker’s *Rhetorical Grammar* (1785) treats the figures in this way, presenting them with guidance on how they might be interpreted and pronounced when encountered in a text. Viewed in context, these methods were designed for pedagogy: not to produce “headless” rote pronunciations of figures, which should always be driven by thought and intention, but to train the students’ coupling so that, when a given figure arises, mind and body know instinctively how to give it appropriate shape. Hence, this section will bring musical and literary discourse on the figures into dialogue, showing how the various figures may be identified in music, and likewise delivered rhetorically in performance. A selection of rhetorical figures that eighteenth-century theorists regarded as relevant to music will be introduced, alongside illustrative examples from literature and musical repertoire, together with whatever indications of delivery (performance, declamation, gesture, or execution) survive in the sources. Where appropriate, these discussions are supplemented by short artistic case studies: interpretive readings by the author (given in the first-person as interpretive subjectivity sign-posting) offered explicitly as illustrations of how such concepts might be activated in practice.

¹³ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 324.

¹⁴ Wentz, *Historical Acting Techniques and the 21st-Century Body*, p. 43.

This distinction matters especially when the discussion turns from treatise definitions to specific works (for instance, sonatas by Mozart, Haydn, C.P.E. Bach, Beethoven, and others). In most cases, neither composers nor contemporary witnesses explicitly label a given passage as this or that rhetorical figure. Accordingly, when the present study proposes that a particular construction may be understood as a figure, it should be read as a historically informed interpretive attribution rather than a claim of direct authorial intent or documentary certainty. These attributions are grounded in period descriptions of figures and their associated effects, and they are pursued to demonstrate how a rhetorical performer might have used such knowledge to shape delivery. The aim, therefore, is not to claim a definitive taxonomy of figures in this repertory (unless explicitly identified by the composer), but to propose a plausible mode of eighteenth-century interpretation: a way of reading musical structures through contemporary rhetorical vocabulary in order to illuminate choices of affect and delivery.

8.1 Exclamation (*Exclamatio* & *Echphonesis*)

The *exclamatio*, *echphonesis*, or exclamation, is a figure of thought which shows that the mind of the orator is filled with an intense emotion. Gottsched described it as a figure “uttered out of a vehement affection,”¹⁵ and Walker claims it “shows that the mind labours with some strong and vehement passion.”¹⁶ The category is therefore broad: this figure may extend to a wide range of emotions. In literature, it is often begun by interjections like O! Alas! Ah! among others, and can be marked by an exclamation mark (!). However, because the exclamation was meant to assume any number of intense emotions, various period directions on its delivery resist the generic modern habit of treating every “!” as a cue for generalized excitement. Rather, the delivery should intensify whatever affect is present rather than defaulting to a single colour.

According to Blair, “Nothing has a worse effect than the frequent and unseasonable use” of the exclamation, indicting an inexperienced writer who is “always calling upon us to enter into transports which he has said nothing to inspire” leading the audience to disgust.¹⁷ Here, Blair does not dismiss the exclamation outright, but warns the student of rhetoric to deploy them tastefully. Overuse becomes affectation and feels un-genuine. As Blair notes, this type of author has confused the external features of expression for a fully-coupled expression itself; namely, such writing “gives us words, and not passion; and of course, can raise no passion, unless that of indignation.”¹⁸ Consequently, exclamations need to be used only in places where they are appropriate.

Regardless, exclamations have an important place in literature and music. Walker gives a multitude of examples from the important theatrical repertory of the eighteenth century. In each, he suggests a certain mode of delivery appropriate to the affect. Various examples from Walker are

¹⁵ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 267.

¹⁶ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 144.

¹⁷ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 423.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 423.

explored below. For instance, in joy, the speaker's delivery is sudden, and elevates the voice to its highest pitch, as shown in this example drawn from Shakespeare's *Othello*:

O my soul's joy!
If after ev'ry tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have waken'd death!¹⁹

Likewise, for intense sorrow in the extreme, which may also be called despair (which may border on frenzy), the voice may also assume a sudden elevation into high tone.

I am not mad – I would to Heav'n I were!
For then 'tis like I should forget myself:
Oh if I could, what grief should I forget!²⁰

But in lesser degrees of sorrow, a soft middle tone is more appropriate. Despite the exclamation point of the next example, an entirely different delivery is required, as Shakespeare's melancholy carries an inherent heaviness which comes from its emotional inertia:²¹

That strain again! it had a dying fall!
Oh, it came o'er my ear like the sweet south,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour.²²

For reproach and contempt, a low but harsh tone is assumed, as in the example below from *Macbeth*:

O proper stuff!
This is the very painting of your fears:
This is the air-drawn dagger, which you said
Led you to Duncan.²³

Walker here demonstrates the wide variety of colours and different emotional inertia that guide the delivery of exclamations when different passions are present. This is certainly a reminder that “!” is not a dynamic marking but a cue to intensify the quality of the passion already present. The same sign can demand very different vocal quality depending on the present feeling.

Musical exclamations assume the same function. In Mattheson, the *exclamatio* may also take on the different passions as appropriate. It is one of the most obvious of the rhetorical devices, and in many cases can be constructed from subordinate tropes; according to Bartel, “many composers as well

¹⁹ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 145.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See p. 122.

²² Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 145.

²³ Ibid.

as authors used more specific figures in expressing exclamations.”²⁴ Already in the sixteenth century, Praetorius had introduced the figure but focused his description on its implications for performance practice.²⁵ It is in the exclamation where Mattheson describes the musical *topoi* appropriate to each passion. Mattheson defines three different types: the “shout”, “longing,” and the “scream,” which are shown in the table below:

Table 4. Exclamations as given by Mattheson.²⁶

Type	Description
1: The “shout”	“The first type consists of an astonishment, a joyous shout, or an encouraging command.... Here, joy is always master and the ruling affection. Therefore, only lively and brisk musical expressions are used in such cases, and particularly large and leaping intervals.”
2: “Longing”	“The second type of outburst or exclamatio expresses all kinds of desire and fervent longing. all pleading, beseeching. complaining, etc. well as frightening, fearing. dreading. etc. The latter require a melodic vehemence best expressed through rapid or at least brisk notes. However, sorrow and grief is the mother of longing and the other sentiments ... Therefore, the composer will use uncommon intervals. now large ones. now small ones, according to the circumstances. At all times tenderness is of particular importance.”
3: The “scream”	“The third type a veritable scream resulting from extreme dismay or astonishment because of horrifying or atrocious events frequently of the highest order of despair. ... Here desperation reigns supreme, which therefore also permits a fallacious use of intervals which exhibit an unruly character when brought together. such as simultaneous major and minor thirds. To accompany such vicious and scandalous screaming, one may choose a raging turmoil of fiddling and piping.”

Scheibe also gives a definition for the musical *exclamatio*. It is “commonly expressed through an ascending passage, using consonances in joyous events or affections and dissonances in sorrowful ones.”²⁷ Notably, this even applies “in regard to both melody and harmony.”²⁸ Scheibe also describes the exclamation in terms of its performance practice. It “must always be distinctly discernible” and

²⁴ Bartel, *Musica poetica*, p. 265.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 266.

²⁶ Mattheson, trans. Bartel, *Musica poetica*, pp. 268–69.

²⁷ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica poetica*, p. 269.

²⁸ Ibid.

“distinguishable from the accompanying instruments:” perhaps relating to its separation temporally, texturally, and dynamically.

The following examples may be plausibly interpreted as musical *exclamations*, based on Mattheson’s and Scheibe’s descriptions. The first is drawn from Mozart’s *Andante cantabile* from Sonata K. 310. It shows examples of the first and second classes of exclamation as defined by Mattheson. Each of the exclamations has been marked with exclamation marks with a number denoting their class.

The image shows a musical score for Mozart's *Andante cantabile* from Sonata K. 310. The tempo is marked "Andante cantabile" and the mood is "con espressione". The score is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. It features two systems of music. The first system includes a piano introduction, followed by a first-class exclamation (!1) marked "Joy, love" (forte-piano), a second-class exclamation (!2) marked "Painful sigh", and a third-class exclamation (!2) marked "Desperate yearning" (crescendo). The second system includes a first-class exclamation (!2), a second-class exclamation (!1) marked "Joy, love", and a third-class exclamation (!2) marked "Painful sigh". The score includes various dynamic markings (p, fp, f, p) and performance instructions (crescendo, tr). The exclamations are marked with exclamation marks and numbers in black boxes.

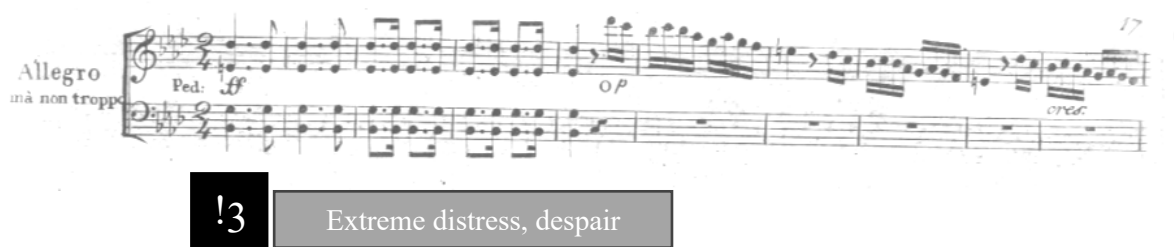
Musical Example 17. *Andante cantabile* of Mozart’s Sonata in a minor, K. 310. NMA IX/25/1, p. 128.

In the first and fifth bars, the exclamations of the first class are approached with a brisk ascent of leaping notes. As a “joyous shout,” they are marked forte-piano, which I would render with a vehement attack and immediate withdrawal, so that the gesture feels like a suddenly flaring cry that subsides as quickly as it arose. The exclamations of the second class are written with sighing appoggiaturas, whose dissonance gives them a sense of longing. Here I would lean into the dissonant appoggiatura in the right hand at the opening of the second bar—slightly delaying and weighting it—so that the “sigh” feels genuinely reluctant to resolve. An exclamation of Mattheson’s third class may be found in the first movement of Mozart’s Sonata in F major, K. 332:



Musical Example 18. Allegro of Mozart's Sonata in F major, K. 332. NMA IX/25/2, p. 28.

The exclamations fall on the diminished chords which are marked with a violent *sforzando* and resound unexpectedly much like terrified screams. For me, this invites an almost vocal conception of the chord: a sudden, raw cry that cuts through the texture. A similar exclamation may be found in the opening of the third movement of Beethoven's *Appassionata* sonata.



Musical Example 19. Allegro ma non troppo from Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata in f minor, No. 23 Op. 57. BHB Inv.-No. 94.340, p. 17.

The fortissimo diminished chords certainly fulfill Mattheson's definition of the "scream," or "extreme dismay or astonishment because of horrifying or atrocious events." Their attack, intensity, and registral placement should, I think, approach the shock of a scream—without becoming crude—to preserve their function as signals of alarm.

Rhetorical figures can be deployed in combinations. The example below shows various *exclamatio* of different classes combined with other rhetorical figures like *gradatio*, *anaphora*, *interrogatio*, and *antithesis* (discussed later) in the *Andante* second movement of Mozart's Sonata in B flat Major K. 533. In my interpretation, each exclamatory gesture here has a twofold function: it

heightens a particular affect (pleading, surprise, agitation) and punctuates the surrounding figures, so that the whole passage feels like a chain of emotional outbursts rather than neutral details.

92

fear

gradatio

3!?

97

terror

Astonishment

Tenderness

3!?

101

Contentedness

2!

Pleasurable sigh

anaphora

105

Anaphora & antithesis

2!

More excited sigh

2!

sad sigh

1!?

dubitatio

Surprise, new revelation

109

1!

1!

Resoluteness

Exuberance, compassion

Exuberance, stricken

113

Resoluteness

o) Vg 1. T. 29.

Musical Example 20. Andante of Mozart's Sonata in F major, K. 533. NMA IX/25/2, p. 112.

8.2 Epiphonema

Epiphomena are a special class of *exclamatio* that produce a concluding reflection, or general statement that sums up or emphasizes the preceding discourse. They “clinch” or summarize an argument with forceful conclusion. As Quintilian notes, it “is a final utterance clinching a Narrative or a Proof.”²⁹ Where a simple exclamation may burst out at any point in the argument, an epiphonema belongs at or

²⁹ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 8.15.10.

near the end: it is the last, pointed cry that gathers what has gone before into a single, memorable insight. These figures, which can also structurally form part of the *peroratio*, drive home a point and send the listener away with a concentrated impression.

Musically, *epiphonemata* function in a comparable way. They often take the form of a brief, heightened restatement or “tag” that seals a phrase or section—sometimes by reiterating a key idea in bolder relief, distilling the affect of the passage into a compact, exclamatory gesture. For a rhetorical performer, they signal a final surge of inner conviction at the point of closure. In the analytical commentary (*Zergliederung*), of his 32 *Préludes pour l'Orgue ou Forte-Piano* (1806), Vogler identifies his use of *epiphonema* in Prelude I in bb. 34–37,³⁰ where the opening theme is re-iterated boldly in the upper register:

The image shows a page from a musical score for Vogler's 32 *Préludes pour l'Orgue ou Forte-Piano*. The score is for two staves, with the tempo marking 'Alleg. moderato.' and the title 'I.' above the first staff. The music is in C major. Measures 34 through 37 are highlighted with a black box labeled 'Epiphonema'. These measures show a bold reiteration of the opening theme in the upper register. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'ff' (fortissimo).

Musical Example 21. Vogler's Prelude No. 1 in C major from 32 *Préludes pour l'Orgue ou Forte-Piano*. Munich: Falter'sche Musikhandlung, n.d.(ca.1806), p. 2.

Here the theme, already familiar, returns as compressed verdict on everything the prelude has just explored. In performance I would treat this reprise with renewed intensity in tone and articulation and allowed just enough space after the cadence for the listener to register it as a clinching thought rather

³⁰ Georg Joseph Vogler, *Zwei und dreissig Präludien für die Orgel und für das Fortepiano, nebst ihrer Zergliederung in aesthetischer, rhetorischer und harmonischer Rücksicht* (Munich: Falter'sche Musikhandlung, 1806), p. 5.

than a continuation. A similar sort of *epiphonema* could be interpreted in the *Allegretto siciliano* in C.P.E. Bach's Sonata for Keyboard and Violin Wq. 76, in b. 34 of the keyboard part:

The image shows a musical score for C.P.E. Bach's Sonata for Keyboard and Violin, Wq. 76. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. Measures 31-35 show the keyboard part with dynamics p and f, and a trill in measure 34. Measures 36-40 show the keyboard part with dynamics p and f, and a trill in measure 39. A black box labeled 'Epiphonema' is placed above measure 34.

Musical Example 22. *Allegretto siciliano* from C.P.E. Bach's Sonata for Keyboard and Violin in b minor, Wq. 76. PHI II/3.1, p. 68.

While this does not reiterate the main theme directly, it behaves epiphonematically: it produces a sort of *exclamatio* that clinches or confirms the end of the D major phrase with an emphatic earnestness. I would therefore let this bar “speak,” slightly heightened in intensity and clarity and followed by a pronounced pause—so that it reads as a sententious comment on the preceding repetitions.

8.3 Interrogation (Interrogatio & Erotesis)

The *interrogatio*, *erotesis*, or interrogation deals with questioning. While questions are a regular component of language, rhetorical interrogation uses questions not merely to request information but to persuade and to unsettle. While posing questions is not figurative in itself, when it is posed in a direct manner by an orator to auditors for effect, inviting them almost to respond, the discourse is enlivened. According to Quintilian, there are two main categories of questions: those which “obtain information” and those that “prove a point,” making the “proof more pointed and cogent.”³¹ the so-called rhetorical question. Such examples given by Cicero include “How long, Catiline, will you abuse our patience?” or “Do you not realise that your plans are exposed?”³² and according to Walker, these assume a falling inflection rather than rising.³³ In such cases the question is formally interrogative, but functionally an emphatic assertion. However, while rhetorical questions are often left for the auditor to answer in their minds, some rhetorical interrogations can also be answered, producing what Quintilian calls ‘variety

³¹ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 9.2.6.

³² Ibid., 9.2.8.

³³ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, pp. 87–91.

that is not unattractive.”³⁴ For example, from Cicero in *Pro Ligario*: “In whose presence am I saying this? In the presence of the man who, although he knew this, restored me to my country before he even saw me.”³⁵ In general, the various interrogations, according to Walker, “rouse the attention by more immediate address to the understanding,” but when “we annex emotion or passion, this figure becomes the most powerful engine in the arsenal of oratory.”³⁶ The above examples show that the interrogation can be coloured with any passion.³⁷ Similarly, Blair proposed that “when men are prompted by passion, whatever they would affirm, or deny, with great vehemence, they naturally put in the form of a question.” Therefore, the question allows orators to express “the strongest confidence of the truth of their own sentiment and appealing to their hearers for the impossibility of the contrary.”³⁸ To illustrate this point, Blair gives an example from Demosthenes addressing the Athenians:

Tell me, will you still go about and ask one another, what news? What can be more astonishing news than this, that the man of Macedon makes war upon the Athenians, and disposes of the affairs of Greece?—Is Philip dead? No, but he is sick. What signifies it to you whether he be dead or alive? For, if any thing happens to this Philip, you will immediately raise up another.³⁹

Here the torrent of questions does far more than a series of flat assertions could. Each interrogatio provides the orator with a fresh impulse: an inner surge of indignation or urgency that must be re-kindled before each phrase. In delivery I would allow a tiny internal “reset” before every question—enough to feel its new thrust—so that the line becomes a sequence of blows rather than a monotone tirade. The listener is cornered not by logic alone but by the experienced “impossibility” of answering “otherwise.”

In their spoken pronunciation, questions often require an upwards inflection, but this is not always the case for figurative questions. Walker gives an example of how Cicero uses interrogation to press and wear down an adversary. Below, several questions proceed towards a climax (see *gradatio* on p. 247), and each successive question “should be pronounced higher and louder than the preceding.” To mark the climax, the word “demand” should suddenly jump into a “lower, louder tone than all.”⁴⁰

I will make you this offer, Plancius; choose any one tribe you please, and show, as you ought, by whom it was bribed; but if you cannot, and, in my opinion, will not even attempt to do this, I will show you how he gained it. Is this a fair contest? Will you engage on this ground? It is an open, honourable challenge to you? Why are you silent? Why do you

³⁴ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 9.2.14.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 148.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 148.

³⁸ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 421.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 421.

⁴⁰ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 148.

dissemble? Why do you prevaricate? I repeatedly insist upon this point, I urge you to it, press it, require it, nay, I demand it of you.⁴¹

In delivery, Walker suggests that each question is spoken with increasing force (attack), loudness, and increasing pitch, until “demand” drops in pitch like a hammer.⁴² The *interrogatio* here is inseparable from *gradatio*: the repeated questioning, intensifying step by step, forces the listener’s sympathy toward the speaker and away from the accused.

In music, the *interrogatio* is also an important figure. As mentioned earlier in the chapter on disposition, an interrogation in music can be expressed by suspensive pauses, upward melodic inflection, or open / imperfect cadences that refuse full closure. Mattheson warns that while “many composers are convinced that a question mark can only be expressed in vocal music through a raising of the voice in one form or another,” just like in speech, this is not always the case, as “many circumstances specifically in music” can “not only allow for exceptions to the rule but often require them.” Figurative questions, as explored in the previous question on disposition, are often marked with a downward inflection.

For Mattheson, “doubt is the true sign of an actual question,” (doubt being an affect in itself, sometimes called perplexity or vexation), the composer must “clearly distinguish between the two forms of the question, and compose his music accordingly ... and to this should be added, that imperfect consonances are most suitable [in expressing a doubting question without raising the voice at the phrase ending].”⁴³ As well, Mattheson connects the basso continuo harmony of a ⁶ to questions, especially when it is landed on in recitatives.⁴⁴ An interrogative cadence, in this sense, is one in which the outer sign (melodic contour, unresolved harmony) leaves the feeling irresolute, suspended between alternatives. Consider the following examples from a set of variations by C.F.D. Schubart:

⁴¹ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 148.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 148–49.

⁴³ Mattheson trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 314–15.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 315.



Musical Example 23. Theme from C.F.D. Schubert's Variations in B flat major (1790). Badische Landesbibliothek Karlsruhe, Variations - Don Mus.Ms. 1762, p. 2.

Here, the interrogatio opens with a rising melodic contour. I would hesitate and agogically stretch the high G, letting my inner feeling sense the irresolution of this sound, and only proceed after taking the time to make a proper “deliberation.” This would put the audience in suspense, waiting expectantly in the hesitation for the pleasant resolution that follows.

For Scheibe, the interrogation was an essential and commonly found building block in musical phrases that is “particularly useful in instrumental music.”⁴⁵ Interrogations, especially as cadences, form the linkage between the various phrases of a composition:

A lengthy piece which is constructed out of numerous connected melodies retains a pleasant cohesion through a frequent application of the *interrogatio*. The subsequent passages must also provide clear answers in response, as it were. Furthermore, the figure can very well be doubled, resulting in numerous successive questions. It can also be employed at the end of a slow movement, where it is used with the most emphasis. In any case however, it must result in a certain cohesion and an indispensable Succession of melodies.⁴⁶

Scheibe thus anticipates a “dialogic” hearing of form: phrases feel as if they ask and answer one another. For the rhetorical performer, this could mean that every interrogative cadence should be inwardly felt

⁴⁵ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 315.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

as a question addressed to what follows. These linkages are important to form cohesion in the various propositions within a musical work. This type of interrogation is commonplace during the period. Take, for instance, the *Allegro* from Mozart's Sonata in B flat major K. 333, which could be interpreted to contain such figures:

Musical Example 24. Allegro from Mozart's Sonata in B flat major, K. 333. NMA IX/25/2, p. 48.

In this example, each interrogation accompanies an imperfect cadence, or one that lands on a ⁶. The interrogations are often coloured with passions in a similar manner to exclamations, and the appoggiaturas could be interpreted to express tender longing. Each interrogation is found at the end of a short melodic segment and provides a gentle linkage and coherence as per Scheibe's definition. In performance I would give each of these cadences just enough space in timing, articulation, and dynamic contour to let the "question" register not only in my own conception, but also for the audience, without overdramatizing them and disturbing the unity of the phrase. Here, a flexible fancy is good to have, as it will allow me to quickly process each "irresolution" and "decision" in the moment. The sense should be of shy, repeated asking rather than a single bold demand.

The same mechanism can also act like Cicero's wearing down of an adversary with successively intensive questions building towards a climax (see *gradatio*). Consider the *Adagio* of Haydn's Sonata in E flat major Hob. XVI/52:



Musical Example 25. Adagio from Haydn's Sonata in E flat major, Hob. XVI/49. Artaria, n.d. [1791]. Plate 352, p. 9.

Each question, which has an upwards melodic inflection, builds in elevation, becoming increasingly fraught and agitated in the growing dissonance. Here I would let each interrogative figure grow in volume and urgency—perhaps with a slight *accelerando*—while still articulating each cadence clearly so that the sense of repeated questioning is not lost in a general rush. The emotional intensity consequently increases, and this could be achieved with *crescendo* and *accelerando*, while maintaining that each interrogation is marked clearly and not lost in the struggle. C.P.E. Bach used a similar sort of combination between *gradatio* (see below) and *interrogatio* with a series of increasingly hopeless and dismayed questions in the opening of his Fantasia in F sharp minor Wq. 67:

vvq v/

Adagio

48. *pp* *mf*

te - - nu - - te

3a *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

3b *p* *f* *p* *ten.* *f*

Musical Example 26. C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor, Wq. 67. PHI I/8.1, p. 103.

In this excerpt, I hear each question as more desperate: the harmony darkens, the figuration tightens, and the pauses between phrases feel less like calm breaths and more like gasps. When performing this passage, I would let the tempo press forward slightly and the touch acquire a clenched intensity in each appoggiatura, so that every interrogative cadence feels like an anguished “Why?” to which no answer comes. In this way, interrogatio becomes not just a formal device, but a direct conduit between inner turmoil and audible sign.

8.4 Dubitatio

The *dubitation* is a figure which is related to the *interrogatio*. Where interrogation presses a question, dubitation lingers in it. It purposefully creates doubt: ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty.⁴⁷ According to Scheibe, *dubitation* is particularly significant in music, appearing across most compositions and genres. It arises when the interaction of melody and harmony leaves the listener unsure of the music’s direction or conclusion. Scheibe warns that the composer must not confuse the coherence of the composition itself but rather lead the listener astray in a deliberate and meaningful way, so that the outcome remains unpredictable.⁴⁸ Similarly, Forkel describes *dubitation* as the expression of an uncertain sentiment, realized either through indecisive modulations or by lingering on a particular point in the music sometimes with a fermata.⁴⁹ In both accounts, doubt is not the absence of design but a carefully staged hesitation within it.

The example below from Haydn shows a combination of both these approaches: a sudden, confusing harmonic turn from E major to an augmented-sixth, accompanied by a lingering of doubt.



Musical Example 27. Adagio from Haydn’s Sonata in E flat major, Hob. XVI/52. *Oeuvres complètes* (Vol.1, No.1), Breitkopf und Härtel, 1799, p. 14.

An example in W.F. Bach’s Fantasia in E minor F. 21, uses an unexpected chromatic shift on a fermata to produce this suspended state of vexation after a furious opening. This *dubitation* is followed by a recitativo episode.

⁴⁷ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 242.

⁴⁸ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, in *ibid.*, p. 244.

⁴⁹ Forkel, trans. Bartel, in *ibid.*



Musical Example 28. W.F. Bach's Fantasia in e minor, F. 21. SBB Mus.ms. Bach P 326, p. 58.

A more extended example of a musical *dubitatio* (which is combined with an ellipsis or *abruptio*) can be found in the Grave of J.C. Bach's Sonata in c minor Op. 5 No. 6 (1765). Here, a tender episode in E-flat major is averted at the cadence. An unexpectedly tense and dissonant modulation to A-flat minor introduces a harmonically instable phrase, made more dissonant by chromatic non-chord notes in the alto and soprano.

Musical Example 29. Grave from J.C. Bach's Sonata in c minor, Op. 5 No. 6. Welcker, n.d. [1765], p. 30.

C.P.E. Bach also employs a modulatory *dubitatio* in the *Andantino* of his Sonata in E minor Wq. 59/1. A bold cadence in E major, which concludes the *Hauptsatz* of the movement, is followed by a long

rhetorical pause. When the music resumes, an unexpected, pianissimo modulation to F major begins in the upper register, creating a misty, dreamy effect. Soft, veiled figurations hover over this new harmony, so that the listener cannot tell whether the previous thought has dissolved or is being remembered at a distance. This feeling of uncertainty is suspended over an *anaphora* and *gradatio*.

Musical Example 30. Andantino from C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in e minor, Wq. 59/1. PHI I/4.2, p. 46.

A more disturbed, frightful version of the modulatory *dubitatio* can be found in C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in F-sharp minor, Wq. 67. A series of highly dissonant diminished seventh chords produces anxious confusion, terrified vexation, and palpable uncertainty, as if in delirium, teetering on the edge of an abyss, unable to decide what course of action to take:

Musical Example 31. C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor, Wq. 67. PHI I/8.1, p. 110.

The delivery of such a figure is connected to the way doubt or perplexity is acted. Austin, referencing Johan Jakob Engel's rhetorical acting treatise *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785), provides such a description of the commonplaces associated with the embodiment of doubt. When thoughts flow freely and without obstacles, the movements of the body are direct and unimpeded. However, when difficulties or uncertainties arise, physical gestures become hesitant or change direction entirely. The head and eyes, which would otherwise move fluidly, become fixed or abruptly shift their position—often with the head thrown back if it was previously inclined forward. Austin, drawing on Engel's observations, illustrates this with a scene from Lessing, where an elderly character, faced with a delicate and

perplexing situation, shifts repeatedly between contrasting postures as his deliberations progress. At one moment, he is shown with head lowered and body leaning forward, and at the next, with his head raised toward the sky, arms crossed behind his back, and weight shifted onto the other leg (see Figure 2) as though his body mirrors the vacillation and struggle of his thoughts.⁵⁰ Doubt, in other words, has its own kinaesthetic signature: broken lines, arrested motions, and sudden reversals.

A rhetorical musician could apply the same logic. *Dubitatio* could be delivered by coupling outward sign to the ebb and flow of inner thought through timing and by indulging in harmonic tensions. Lingering on certain notes or harmonies, inserting hesitations, or breaking the expected flow with a rhetorical pause can evoke contemplation or perplexity. Sudden shifts between contrasting keys, dynamics, or textures can express the interruption of ideas or the struggle to reach a resolution. In delivery, I would let my inner feeling of irresolution govern these moments: allowing the hand to hesitate, the tempo to waver slightly, or the dynamic to retreat and surge, so that the notated dissonances become the outward manifestations of my imagination pausing, contemplating, and deciding to move forward.

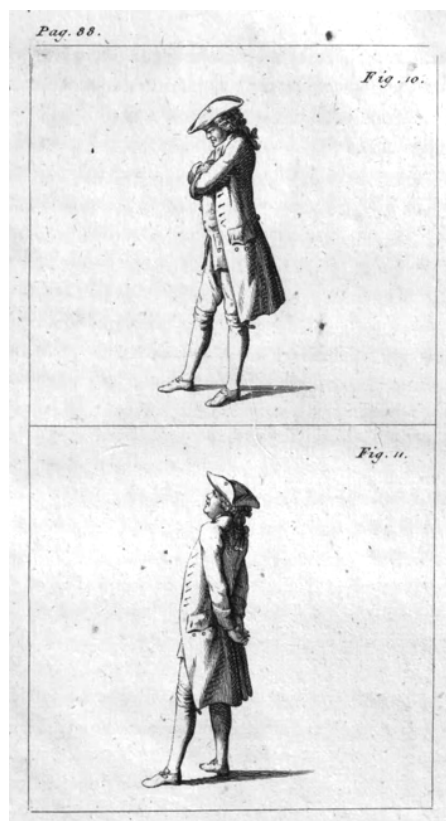


Figure 2. Expression of doubt in Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785). *Erster Theil*, Fig. 10, 11.

⁵⁰ Austin, *Chironomia*, pp. 491–92.

8.5 Figures of Repetition (Anaphora & Repetitio)

The *anaphora*, or *repetitio*, is a figure that deals with general repetition, often used to produce rhetorical emphasis and amplification. In ordinary speech, repeated words or phrases with no clear intention quickly become empty padding. Likewise, in rhetorical poetics, repetition only acquires value when it is purposeful and shaped. However, as authors such as Walker demonstrate, the deliberate repetition of words should be shaped by rhetorical intention, and this requires variation in delivery—through shifts in pitch, force, and tone—to create insistence, heighten emphasis, and achieve amplification. Music is no different. In music, repetition is a common structural and expressive feature. For instance, Mattheson remarked, “What is more common in melodic composition than the anaphora, in which an already introduced melodic fragment is repeated at the beginning of various following phrases, thus establishing a relationship?”⁵¹

Similarly, Scheibe describes the *anaphora* as the repetition of certain musical notes, passages, or ideas through which the overall coherence of the piece or the meaning of the text is given greater clarity and emphasis. At the same time, he stresses that the primary thematic material must not be overused or left unchanged; each return must be marked out and dignified. Moreover, repetitions should not all occur in the same key, as key changes heighten the impact and intensity of the repetition. Moreover, he includes among the techniques of repetition those that deal with structural *dispositio*: the *da capo* in an aria or other composition after the second part, or when each section is performed twice. Scheibe also notes that this figure is most effective when combined with another figure, *paronomasia*.⁵² Forkel essentially expresses the same views, including its use in *dispositio* and its combination with *paronomasia*.⁵³

For the rhetorical performer, repetition is arguably never neutral. Mechanical reiteration—or formulaic habits such as automatically playing every echo softer—would arguably sound hollow or even overly mannered because mechanism has supplanted sincere coupling. For repetition to be effective, it must serve a clear *telos*: to insist, to console, to accuse, to intensify, to recollect, or any number of similar affective trajectories. In practice, the performer ought to decide what each repetition “says” that the first statement did not. This may involve changes in tone colour, dynamic shading, articulation, timing, ornamentation, or embellishment. By doing so, the performer transforms mere reiteration into a powerful expressive device that captures and sustains attention.

8.5.1 Paronomasia

The *paronomasia* is a class of *anaphora*, that is a repetition with alterations and additions. As Gottsched notes, it arises when “a word or saying is repeated but with an addition which produces an exceptional

⁵¹ Mattheson, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 189.

⁵² Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 189–90.

⁵³ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 189–90.

emphasis.”⁵⁴ It has a very specific musical application. Scheibe describes the next figure as *amplification*, or *paronomasia*, which is generally used in combination with the preceding figure, *repetitio*. *Paronomasia* occurs when a previously stated sentence, word, or idea is repeated but with a new, distinctive, and emphatic addition. Scheibe notes that this figure is equally effective in both instrumental and vocal music. Often, just a few notes of a phrase are repeated with a small yet striking addition, which might even be as minimal as a single note. Likewise, a passage can be repeated with added specifications of dynamics, or the concluding notes of a section may be reiterated by all parts with enhanced emphasis.⁵⁵ But importantly, for Scheibe, “the repetition must strengthen the emphasis of the expression and must lend it singular beauty.”⁵⁶ Forkel largely adopts a similar definition for *paronomasia*, connecting it directly with amplification.⁵⁷

Bartel underscores that repetition thus gains its greatest power when combined with *paronomasia*, involving additions such as extra notes, ornaments, or variations in dynamics and rhythm.⁵⁸ Crucially, any repetition must heighten the expressive emphasis and impart a distinctive beauty: toward what Forkel describes as the individualization of general sentiments from the archetypical exemplars to the local, felt, subjective inner experience of the performer him/herself.⁵⁹ Importantly, nothing in the historical definitions requires that these additions be fully prescribed in the score.

For the feeling musician, *paronomasia* sometimes arises intuitively in performance as a sensitive response to *telos* and *kairos*. HIP sometimes calls this practice “ornamentation.” But while the term could sometimes imply the addition of “frivolous” decorative elements, arguably, intuitive embellishment can serve the *telos* and *kairos* of the moment, provided that they are added tastefully. These additions could intensify and heighten the passions expressed through variety and amplification. This view contextualizes situations where the composer has written repetitions in the score, which could be considered to be a rhetorical prompts that invite the performer’s expressive agency. Reading the moment (*kairos*), the performer may choose, for example, to modify the repetition with a slight rhythmic modification, a more penetrating articulation, added embellishments, or different dynamic shading as the moment demands. In this sense, *paronomasia* becomes a site of sympathetic interpretation: of co-creation. The score offers a repeated framework, and the interpreter “answers” it with a small but telling surplus of invention. Furthermore, in this perspective, a composer leaving such

⁵⁴ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 351.

⁵⁵ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 351.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁵⁷ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 352.

⁵⁸ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 350.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 350.

passages under-notated is not necessarily a deficiency of composition, but a deliberate affordance to the performer in delivery—room for the performer’s “genius” to personalize the expression in the moment.

The delivery of this type of varied repetition in declamation was discussed by elocutionists like Walker and Lord Kames, and their suggestions can easily be applied analogously to music. Consider this example from John Dryden’s ode, *Alexander’s Feast; or, The Power of Musick* (1697). It illustrates how *epanaphora* (a class of anaphora that deals with the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning or end of successive sentences) can be delivered with great variety:

He chose a mournful muse,
Soft pity to infuse ;
He sung Darius, great and good,
By too severe a fate,
Fall’n, fall’n, fall’n, fall’n,
Fall’n from his high estate,
And weltring in his blood.

Figure 3. Excerpt from Dryden’s *Ode* as it appears in John Walker’s *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 154.

To show the range of possibilities afforded to an orator, Walker provides two solutions for approaching this *epanaphora*. First, he suggests that each repetition of “fall’n” should be separated by a long pause and should assume a wide range of variety. The final repetition of “fall’n” ought to be in a higher tone and more elevated than any of the former repetitions. Secondly, he also references the writings of Henry Home, Lord Kames, who suggests that each repetition represents a gradual sinking of the mind. Walker interprets this as evoking pity, and suggests the following:

1. The speaker should start in a low tone.
2. The first “fall’n” should have a rising inflection approaching a monotone.
3. The second should be nearly in a monotone with a slight falling inflection.
4. The third with the falling inflection.
5. The fourth with the rising inflection without monotone.
6. The fifth with the rising inflection, rising very high, such that the voice may fall gradually on the succeeding words to form a cadence.⁶⁰

This interpretation suggests that both Walker and Lord Kames value diversity and colour in the pronunciation of the *epanaphora*. Lord Kames’s description reveals a highly nuanced and almost musical approach to its pronunciation. His instructions emphasize the importance of shaping each

⁶⁰ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, pp. 155–56.

repetition of the word “fall’n” with a distinct inflection, avoiding mechanical sameness and instead building a dynamic contour that heightens the sentimental effect. The gradual rises and falls of inflections prescribed create a sense of both insistence and progression, allowing the repetitions to accumulate gravitas rather than sounding monotonous. In musical performance, a rhetorical performer could adopt the same principle: every repeated figure, motif, or cadence could either intensify the affect, shift its colour, or reveal a new facet of it, all motivated by an inner feeling rather than a mechanical or slavish “obligation to ornament.”

8.5.2 Epiphora & Epistrophe

A further class of *anaphora* is the *epiphora* and *epistrophe*: closely related figures that deal with repetitions at the ends of phrases. Gottsched similarly defines *epiphora* as a rhetorical figure in which the conclusion of one phrase or passage is repeated multiple times in the passages that follow within the discourse.⁶¹ In addition, Gottsched defines *epistrophe* as a figure in which the final words of one sentence are repeated several times at the end of the sentences that follow.⁶² Both figures operate “from the tail,” binding successive members together through a recurring ending.

Walker gives an example of the delivery of *epiphora* and *epistrophe*. They can be used to create structural and thematic unity. According to Walker, these repeated words must often be spoken with a consistent inflection, but with gradually increasing force and a rising pitch. Consider the following example from the *Second Oration of Cicero against Marc Antony*:

As trees and plants necessarily arise from seeds, so are you, Antony, the seed of the most calamitous war. You mourn, O Romans, that three of your armies have been slaughtered—they were slaughtered by Antony: you lament the loss of your most illustrious citizens—they were torn from you by Antony: the authority of this order is deeply wounded—it is wounded by Antony: in short, all of the calamities we have ever since beheld, and what calamities have we not beheld? If we reason rightly, have been entirely owing to Antony. As Helen was of Troy, so the bane, the misery, the destruction of this state—is Antony.⁶³

In Walker’s explanation of this passage’s pronunciation, the first sentence must be spoken as a question and answer, each occupying different tones of the voice. The following statement at “You mourn” adopts an open, middle tone without much force, such that “they were slaughtered by Antony” can fall into “lower, louder, and more energetic tone.”⁶⁴ Each interjection which returns to the *epistrophe*, Antony, must be pronounced in a similar tone to this, with ‘increasing force and a higher tone on the word Antony.’⁶⁵ Because the last two members (phrases) have a different structure from the rest, they

⁶¹ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 261.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁶³ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, pp. 153–54.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

should assume a different pronunciation. “Antony” should “be pronounced in a lower tone than in the former members, but with increasing force to the last.”⁶⁶ This will in turn produce the effect of a climax—certainly crossover with the figure of *gradatio*—and each part of the discourse has a proportional relation to the others, forming a “striking, harmonious whole.”⁶⁷ Walker’s description of this passage highlights how repetition, when delivered with careful gradation of tone, force, and pitch, transforms into a powerful rhetorical climax. His instructions show that the repetition of “Antony” should be intensified with each recurrence, creating a sense of mounting indignation and emotional intensity. By varying the tone and energy across the phrases, the delivery achieves both unity and dramatic escalation—an example of how *epiphora* merges with *gradatio* to produce a compelling, cohesive effect.

Scheibe defines *epistrophe* as the repetition of the ending of one melodic passage at the conclusion of other passages. This type of repetition can be structural, as he notes that in concertos, the closing phrase of the first solo section is often repeated in the tonic key by the soloist at the end of the movement. Such restatements may also appear midway through a concerto, as well as in sonatas with two voices or single-voice concertos, such as keyboard concertos. In powerful arias with instrumental accompaniment, the final part of the first ritornello can similarly be repeated in the middle or at the end. Scheibe notes that this figure is also found in accompanied recitatives, where short choral interjections are sung in a similar manner.⁶⁸ Similarly, Forkel defines *epistrophe* (or “return”) as the recurrence of the ending of the first melodic passage at the close of subsequent passages. It is a type of *repetitio*, but with a key distinction: *epistrophe* focuses solely on the repetition of a passage’s ending.⁶⁹

8.6 Gradatio & Climax

The figure of *gradatio* or *climax* is a rhetorical device in which successive clauses, phrases, or musical ideas rise step by step in importance, intensity, or expressive weight, culminating in a powerful conclusion. Blair observes that one of the most effective ways to give strength to a sentence—or, by analogy, to a musical phrase—is to arrange its members so that they build on one another, growing in force and significance until they reach a decisive peak.⁷⁰ This gradual ascent not only sustains the listener’s attention but also creates a sense of inevitability and resolution, which is considered a hallmark of elegant and persuasive composition. Gottsched likewise defines *gradatio* or climax as the stepwise progression from one word or phrase to the next, each carrying greater force and impact than the one before. He describes it simply as moving “from a weak expression to a stronger one.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 154.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 262.

⁶⁹ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 262–63.

⁷⁰ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 287.

⁷¹ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 222.

Walker further differentiates between enumeration, gradation, and climax, clarifying that while all three involve a listing or succession of elements, they are distinguished by their rhetorical purpose and delivery. What unites them, Walker notes, is an “accumulation of particulars”⁷² that builds a comprehensive picture for the listener. However, a climax specifically implies a rising degree of force, passion, and intensity, where each successive member of the series must surpass the previous one in tone and emphasis. By contrast, an enumeration—being more neutral and descriptive—does not necessarily involve such an escalation. In this case, the inherent sameness of the elements calls for a “sameness of inflection,” maintaining a steady tone so as not to falsely suggest a gradation where none is intended.⁷³ Even there, however, the speaker must introduce subtle variation simply to avoid monotony.

In the climax, Walker emphasizes that in delivery, the latter members of such a series should be pronounced (or performed) with progressively greater force and a higher elevation of tone, aligned with the increasing degree of passion. The first members up to the penultimate should adopt falling inflections, with the penultimate taking a large rising inflection so that it can fall to a much lower tone in the final member, which adopts a lower tone than the rest and falls to conclude.⁷⁴ Hence, the final or concluding member must be treated with distinct emphasis—either through a more elevated tone, if the series culminates in a strong climax, or by deliberately softening and lowering the tone to mark resolution, depending on the rhetorical character.⁷⁵ In this view, the beauty of gradation lies in the sense of unity and directed motion it creates: each step contributes to the overall progression, and the last element crowns the series with maximum impact.

For example, Walker gives Hamlet’s famous exclamation as an example, which combines *anaphora* and *exclamatio* with *gradatio*:

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a God!

Here, Walker insists that each successive clause should rise in tone, energy, and expressive force, mirroring the cumulative elevation of the ideas being expressed. For instance, the opening question, “What a piece of work is man!”, establishes a tone of astonishment and admiration but must leave room for the following phrases to climb in intensity. Hence, each phrase ascends in grandeur and admiration, with the final line standing apart as the rhetorical and emotional climax. However, that very

⁷² Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 151.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.151.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–53.

climax, “how like a God!”, gains its weight not from sheer loudness alone, but from the combination of greatest emphasis with a lower, grounded tone that confers gravitas.

In music, *gradatio* had an increasingly important place in the eighteenth century. Bartel underscores that the eighteenth-century understanding of *gradatio* centers on the principle of emotional intensification, combining the ideas of incremental growth (*auxesis*) and graduated progression (*climax*) into a single figure. It became a key descriptor for compositional devices like the Mannheim crescendo, and more generally for passages where a motive, harmony, or texture is driven through successive “stages” of increasing tension.⁷⁶ Scheibe’s definition mirrors Gottsched’s, emphasizing that *gradatio*, or “ascent,” occurs when a piece builds gradually from weaker passages to stronger ones, steadily increasing the importance and emphasis of the expression. He finds this particularly effective when music begins softly and tentatively, then grows progressively more powerful until it culminates in the most intense melody and harmony, stirring the attentive listener to awe and amazement.⁷⁷ Forkel similarly describes *gradatio* as one of the most powerful and pleasing figures, characterized by a stepwise intensification from weaker to stronger passages, thereby expressing increasingly potent emotions. He points to the crescendo as the conventional musical expression of this figure, rising from the softest piano to the strongest fortissimo. An even more refined form, Forkel adds, is achieved when this crescendo is combined with the continuous introduction of new ideas and harmonic modulations, producing a richer and more compelling sense of ascent.⁷⁸

In delivery, *gradatio* offers a clear pathway for coupling and Aaron Hill’s “Mazy Round:” each step in the series gives the performer a new “rung” on which to increase inner agitation and external energy, so that feeling is not simply switched on at the end, but coaxed naturally through successive, audible stages. In the opening *Hauptsatz* of C.P.E. Bach’s Rondo in E flat Wq. 61/I, found in the first eight bars, a *gradatio*, employing an *anaphora*, can be discovered in three steps. The melody ensures that each member of the series increases in pitch. I believe that each repetition should be given progressively greater force (articulatory attack) and an excited, insistent urgency, so that the listener clearly perceives a three-step ascent rather than three identical statements.

⁷⁶ Bartel, *Musica poetica*, pp. 220–21.

⁷⁷ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica poetica*, p. 224.

⁷⁸ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica poetica*, p. 224.

Rondo I in E-flat Major

Andantino Wq 61/1

Musical Example 32. C.P.E. Bach's Rondo in E flat major, Wq. 61/1. PHI I/4.2, p. 83.

In another example also combining *gradatio* with *anaphora*, C.P.E. Bach uses a *Monte* series of three ascending steps. Each step adopts an increasingly assertive forcefulness, each with a confident flourishing gesture followed by two strikes with wedge articulations. The tension of this *anaphora* is then suddenly released by an exclamation. Here, I imagine the performer can slightly separate each “wave” of the pattern—giving it a new impulse—so that the sense of swelling pride and insistence becomes palpable.

Musical Example 33. Presto from C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in e minor, Wq. 59/1. PHI I/4.2, p. 43.

A conventional example of a Mannheim Crescendo can be found in Mozart's Sonata for Violin & Keyboard in E flat K. 302, written in Mannheim in 1778.

Allegro

9

17

23

29

gradatio

climax

f

p

crescendo

tr.

fp

Musical Example 34. Allegro from Mozart's Sonata for Violin & Keyboard in E flat major, K. 302. NMA VIII/23/1, p. 78.

In this example of a *gradatio*, which mirrors an expressive device found in symphonies from Mannheim, a repeating motive is built up in increasing intensity, rising in pitch and, while beginning in the violin, transfers into the high register of the keyboard (*hyperbaton*). It is accompanied by increasing dynamics and rhythmic motion in the accompanying textures, progressing from eighths, to triplets, to leaping octaves in the bass accompanied by rapid repeated sixteenths in the violin. Here, I see the performer's task as "riding" this accumulation, letting physical and emotional tension grow with each impulse so that the final stage feels like the inevitable crest, not an arbitrary outburst.

C.P.E. Bach deploys a *gradatio* at the climactic close of his *Sturm und Drang* Fantasia in F-sharp minor Wq. 67. Building both in dynamic and dissonance, the flurry of frenzied arpeggios, each with a spicy chromaticism builds in an overwhelming crescendo. This sublime terror builds in intensity, rising in steps by a tone (anaphora) until it ceases suddenly (a form of *ellipsis*: see below) with a solemn, dark, resounding A in the bass, much like the toll of a great clock snapping the subject out of existential dread to a cold inevitability. Here *gradatio* and abrupt *ellipsis* work together: the listener is carried up to the brink by cumulative motion, then dropped into a single, bare tone like the heart falling from a precipice into lucidity.

The musical score consists of four systems of staves, each representing a measure from 43d to 43g. Each system has a treble and bass clef staff. The key signature is F-sharp minor (three sharps). Measure 43d is marked 'p' (piano) and has a 'gradatio' label above it. Measure 43e is marked 'f' (forte). Measure 43f is marked 'p'. Measure 43g is marked 'f' and has a 'climax' label above it. Four horizontal arrows below the staves indicate the overall upward trend in dynamics and intensity from measure 43d to 43g.

Musical Example 35. C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor, Wq. 67. PHI I/8.1, p. 111.

8.7 Hyperbaton

Hyperbaton is a figure involving the transference or displacement of elements, be they words or musical material, from their natural order to another position. According to Scheibe, this can occur when individual notes are shifted between registers—such as a tone that naturally belongs to the upper voice being placed in the lower voice—or when an entire melodic thought is transferred to another voice or register, a technique frequently encountered in fugues and contrapuntal writing.⁷⁹ In rhetorical terms, hyperbaton “twists” the expected line of discourse; in musical terms it casts an idea into a new register, voice, or location, so that the same thought is heard under a different light.

In keyboard music, this often could manifest through the exchange of material between registers or voices (e.g., a melody line appearing in a different register or inverting the normal voice distribution), or through the rearrangement of a theme’s expected progression with interruptions, variations, or interjections before returning to its original form. Mozart employs this sort of figure when he reuses the same material in a different register, as in the *Allegro assai* of the Sonata in F major K. 332:



Musical Example 36. Allegro assai of Mozart’s Sonata in F major, K. 332. NMA IX/25/2, p. 47.

Hyperbaton may also involve disrupting the normal progression of a melody with unexpected interjections or alterations, which later resolve when the original idea returns in a new location. Forkel adds that true contrapuntal artistry is fundamentally based on such inversions and rearrangements of musical ideas.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 302–03.

⁸⁰ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 303.

8.8 Distributio

Distributio is a figure that first appears in musical writings in the late Baroque in Mattheson's writings as a figure of amplification. In rhetoric, it deals with *partition*: the division of an argument into subdivisions, in order to, as Gottsched puts it, "provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the argument."⁸¹ Analogously, Scheibe explains that it occurs "when the principal theme [*Hauptsatz*] of a composition is presented in such a manner that each of its parts is successively and thoroughly elaborated."⁸² Forkel explains that the subdivision of a principal theme allows the musical material to be examined from multiple perspectives. Such subdivisions are particularly useful when the main theme is too extended or complex to be fully understood or appreciated at once. According to Forkel, a composition aims to express either a particular or a general sentiment. In both cases, the relationships and circumstances surrounding that sentiment are so varied that its full meaning can only be clarified by breaking it down into its constituent parts. Forkel also poses that subdivisions can also be related to melodic diminutions to create more variety and dynamism.⁸³

Vogler offers an unusually concrete example of *distributio* in his overture to *Hamlet*, where he explicitly "dissects" Hamlet's reaction to the ghost into separate physiological strands distributed across the orchestra. After a section in which the ghost has appeared, he describes the following passage as a turbulent succession of competing feelings building toward a climactic tumult:

now revenge boils in the breast of the noble Hamlet 60). From vein to vein the resolute decision wells up. The pulse beats violently 65) – it becomes agitated – grows ever 67) more clamorous – blows – repeated deeply felt blows, squeezed out by unbearable pain 70), accompany this tumult of the passions.⁸⁴

The numbers reference certain numbered annotations appearing on the facsimile below. Vogler's scoring realizes this commentary as a literal *distributio* of one overarching passion across differentiated musical layers. The basses mark the "pulse" with pounding repeated notes; violas and second violins depict general agitation through restless sixteenth figurations; the first violins carry the surging "revenge" motive as it wells up "from vein to vein," rushing upwards and lashing out. A single *Hauptempfindung*—Hamlet's vengeful turmoil—is thus unpacked into coordinated but distinct musical functions, each representing one organ or symptom of the same inner state.

For the rhetorical performer, such scoring could be a prompt for musical painting: for example, the bass could feel like the bodily thud of the heart, the inner strings like nervous tremor, the first violins

⁸¹ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 240.

⁸² Scheibe, trans. by Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 241.

⁸³ Forkel, trans. by Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 241–42.

⁸⁴ nun kocht im Busen des edeln Hamlet die Rache 60). Von Ader 61) 63) zu Ader 62) 64) quillt der mannhafte Entschluss. Der Puls klopft heftig 65) – er wird unruhig 66) – wächst immer 67) aufbrausender an – 68) Stöße – wiederholte 69) empfindsame Stöße, ausgepreßt von dem unerträglichen Schmerzen 70), begleiten diesen Sturm der Leidenschaften. Georg Joseph Vogler, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule* (Mannheim: 1778–79), Bd. 1, p. 334, trans. Anne Smith

like the swelling of resolve. *Distributio* here does not weaken the unity of the affect; it intensifies it by showing how the same emotion inhabits different parts of the body.

126 si levano gli Sordini. 59
Allegro. 60 3.

Pia. 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

Crescendo *f* *Crescendo* *f*

Fag. col Basso.

1^{to} Vol. 2^d Vol.

Fag.

Corni.

Flaut.

Obac.

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Musical Example 37. Allegro section of Vogler's Hamlet symphony. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg / "Gegenstände der Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule: Mannheimer Monatsschrift" / 126.

8.9 Antithesis

Antithesis is the rhetorical figure that emphasizes meaning through contrast. As Quintilian notes, such contrast can occur at many levels—between individual words, pairs of words, or even entire sentences—each set deliberately against its opposite to sharpen expression and meaning.⁸⁵ Gottsched similarly defines antithesis as the arrangement of opposing ideas side by side “in order to highlight the one through the other,” using contrast as a tool to draw the listener’s focus and make the opposition more vivid.⁸⁶ Blair explains the essence of this figure by comparing it to the effect of juxtaposed colours: “White never appears so bright as when it is opposed to black, and when both are viewed together.”⁸⁷ Antithesis, therefore, strengthens impressions by making the qualities of each element appear sharper when contrasted with its opposite. For this reason, Blair notes that when an antithesis is carefully constructed—when the opposing elements mirror each other in structure and balance—it enhances the clarity and force of the contrast. Walker observes that “things, very different or contrary, are contrasted or placed together, that they may mutually set off and illustrate each other,” stressing that few rhetorical figures benefit more from a skillful and expressive delivery.⁸⁸ A well-pronounced antithesis not only clarifies the meaning of the text but also delights the ear by voicing the opposition in a way that mirrors the contrast in thought.

Walker shows the delivery of an antithesis through an example of a passage from Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67):

When the gay and smiling aspect of things baa begun to leave the passages to a man’s heart thus thoughtlessly unguarded—when kind and caressing looks of every object without that can flatter his senses, have conspired with the enemy within to betray him and put him off his defence—when music likewise hath lent her aid, and tried her power upon the passions—when the voice of singing men and the voice of singing women, with the sound of the viol and the lute, have broke in upon his soul; and in some tender note, have touched the secret springs of rapture—that moment let us dissect and look into his heart—see how vain! how weak! how empty a thing it is! Look through its several recesses—those pure mansions formed for the reception of innocence and virtue—and spectacle! behold those fair inhabitants now dispossessed—turned out of their sacred dwellings, to make room—for what?—at the best for levity and indiscretion—perhaps for folly—it may be for more impure guests, which possibly, in so general a riot of the mind and senses, may take occasion to enter unsuspected at the same time.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, IX.iii.BI.

⁸⁶ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 198.

⁸⁷ Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric*, p. 418.

⁸⁸ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 171.

⁸⁹ Laurence Sterne, quoted in Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 172.

Walker advises that this passage should begin in a plaintive tone, almost approaching a monotone, to reflect the gentle and seductive influences described in the opening lines. As the delivery reaches the words “the springs of rapture,” the voice should employ contrasting inflections—first a falling on “springs,” then a rising tone on “rapture”—sliding upward to a noticeable height to express the ecstatic intensity of the word. Following this, the voice must suddenly drop to a low tone infused with severity and a touch of indignation, reflecting the “wretched state of the heart” beneath the façade of happiness.⁹⁰ This abrupt shift from high, plaintive tones to low, indignant ones enhances the contrast in the description and brings out the full rhetorical energy and beauty of Sterne’s thought. In several further examples from authors like Cicero and Demosthenes, Walker emphasizes that the opposing parts of an antithesis should be set apart by a deliberate rhetorical pause, allowing the listener to perceive the contrast with greater clarity.⁹¹ This pause not only marks the boundary between the two opposing ideas but also provides the speaker with the opportunity to modulate their voice: adopting a distinct mode of delivery for each side of the contrast. Walker’s method thus relies not only on the “harmony” of the words and their meanings but also on the musical qualities of the voice itself—changes in pitch, tone, force, and inflection—to make the opposition vivid and striking.

In the musical antithesis, contrasting sentiments are deliberately set against one another. Mattheson explains that musical antithesis can be expressed through a variety of means, such as inverting the direction of a melodic line, employing intervals that oppose one another, or introducing sudden changes of key, rhythm, or other musical parameters to mirror the textual opposition.⁹² Scheibe describes musical antithesis as the deliberate contrast of passages to make the principal subject stand out more vividly. This is especially common in fugues, where the main subject is set against other themes to amplify its effect. A notable aspect of this figure is the invention of entirely contrasting subjects or “*Gegensätze*” (see Chapter 7.4.2) which, on their own, may seem unrelated to the main theme, but when juxtaposed, enhance its clarity and character. Scheibe also notes that antithesis is particularly essential in vocal music when the text expresses two opposing sentiments.⁹³ Forkel compares musical antithesis to examples or proofs in speech—devices that compel the listener to recognize and affirm the primary idea by contrasting it with another, which can be part of the large-scale disposition of a work. These opposing elements can either appear alongside the principal theme, as is typical in fugues and polyphonic works, or they may be presented successively, particularly when both the primary and contrasting themes are shaped to be easily memorable.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 172.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 172–75.

⁹² Mattheson, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 199.

⁹³ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 200.

⁹⁴ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 200.

8.10 Ellipsis & Abruptio

Ellipsis, or *abruptio*, was understood in the eighteenth century to be a figure of thought characterized by an abrupt breaking off of thought, where the rhetorician begins a statement but leaves it unfinished, forcing the audience to infer the remainder. Gottsched defines ellipsis as the omission of something easily understood, describing it as a figure in which a speaker, overwhelmed by the vehemence of emotion, cannot sustain the flow of words. The passion of the moment causes the mouth and tongue to fall behind the rapid movement of the soul's thoughts, resulting in a sudden interruption and a leap to a new idea.⁹⁵

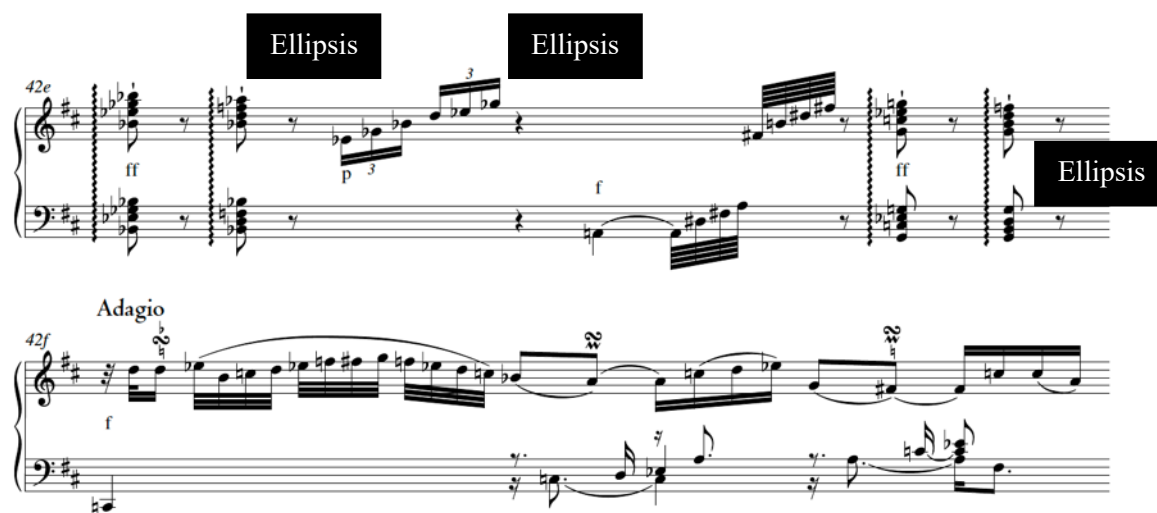
This figure has special prominence in music, where the contrast between sound and silence is especially poignant. Scheibe similarly identifies ellipsis as the breaking off of a passage, occurring in two forms: the first is a sudden silence in the middle of a statement, prompted by a powerful sentiment, while the second is a musical equivalent, in which a composer deliberately disrupts the expected conclusion of a phrase. For example, in C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor Wq. 67, the thought often breaks off after an intensive episode, like at the end of b. 38. This leaves the listener in an anxious suspense:

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled '38', shows a rapid, intense passage in f sharp minor. The bottom staff, labeled '39', is marked 'Adagio' and shows a sudden change in tempo and dynamics, with a label 'Ellipsi' pointing to the end of measure 38. The bottom staff also includes lyrics: 'te - nu - te'.

Musical Example 38. C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor, Wq. 67. PHI I/8.I, p. 108.

Similarly, C.P.E. Bach in the same fantasia uses ellipsis to quickly diffuse a fortissimo outburst of rage (in E flat minor):

⁹⁵ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 248.



Musical Example 39. C.P.E. Bach's Fantasia in f sharp minor, Wq. 67. PHI I/8.1, p. 110.

This latter form often involves altering or “evading” a cadence, moving instead to a foreign and unexpected chord. The more intense the emotion, Scheibe observes, the more striking and remote this interruption must be to capture its force.⁹⁶ Forkel also highlights ellipsis as a means of expressing sentiment, particularly when a passage that has gradually grown in intensity is suddenly broken off, only to continue with a new and altered idea. Like Scheibe, he notes that this device can be mirrored in music by replacing a predictable cadence with a surprising one, thereby breaking the thread of the modulation.⁹⁷ As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, Forkel saw ellipsis as a figure of thought—it illuminates the trajectory of the rhetorical performer's emotions by empirically capturing the sudden, unrestrained movement of thought and feeling.

C.P.E. Bach employs an *abruptio* in the second class to transition into a *dubitatio*, which serves as a dreamy, fantasia-like modulatory transition to the second movement of his Sonata in E minor Wq. 59/1. Here, the expected cadence in the second ending of the repeat is evaded. The expected conclusion of the petulant E minor movement is subverted: what replaces it is an arpeggiated, uncertain C major chord. Hence, I interpret the irritation expressed in the first movement being immediately quelled with uneasy dreaming.

⁹⁶ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 250.

⁹⁷ Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 250–51.

Musical Example 40. Presto from C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in e minor Wq. 59/I. PHI I/4.2, p. 45.

Beethoven also employs an *abruptio* in the transition to the third movement of his *Appassionata* sonata.

Musical Example 41. Close of the Andante con moto from Beethoven's *Appassionata* Sonata in f minor, No. 23 Op. 57. BHB Inv.-No. 94.340, p. 16.

For the performer, I treat ellipsis as the moment where inner feeling seems to “overrun” the notated continuation: one must dare to let the silence or harmonic swerve carry emotional weight, resisting the urge to smooth it away. The break must be experienced in performer and audience like an involuntary interruption of thought, not a polite caesura.

8.11 Aposiopesis

Aposiopesis is a general pause that creates a poignant rhetorical silence. It is related to the *abruptio* and ellipsis: for instance, both Gottsched and Johann Martin Spiess consider the *aposiopesis* as a species of ellipsis. However, while the *abruptio*'s break is often sudden and unprepared, *aposiopesis* is a more

general use of silence, and thus not necessarily abrupt.⁹⁸ Such pauses, following the expression of sublime ideas, offer a moment of reflection for the listener to comprehend them. In terms of coupling, aposiopesis acknowledges that the body and imagination also need time to “reset”: the sentiment must reverberate inside the performer before a new one can arise.

In C.P.E. Bach’s Sonata for Keyboard and Violin in b minor, Wq. 76, a notable aposiopesis occurs:

The image displays a musical score for C.P.E. Bach's Sonata for Keyboard and Violin in b minor, Wq. 76. The score is written for two staves: the top staff for the Violin and the bottom staff for the Keyboard. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 73 to 76, and the second system covers measures 77 to 83. In measure 78, there is a full bar of rest for both the Violin and the Keyboard, which is highlighted with a black box and the label 'aposiopesis' in white text. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (p for piano, f for forte).

Musical Example 42. Allegretto siciliano of C.P.E. Bach’s Sonata for Keyboard and Violin in b minor, Wq. 76. PHI II/3.1, p. 62.

After an aggressively-forceful unison melodic *interrogatio* in bb. 76–77 expressing a degree of unresolved agitation and displeasure, a full bar of rest occurs in b. 78. This poignant silence allows the forceful idea to resonate but also gives the performers time to transition in their imagination into a completely different one, as the keyboard begins anew in a more pitiable, *piano* melody, that builds via *anaphora* in sequence towards the more resigned recapitulation of one of the secondary themes in b. 83. I believe that this silence is thus not an empty gap but a hinge between different affects, and must be “felt through” by the performers if the ensuing change of character is to be convincing.

8.12 Suspensio

A *suspensio* is a structural figure which delays the initial presentation of the *Hauptsatz*. Quintilian describes *suspensio* as the technique of deliberately holding the audience in suspense for a time before delivering something even more impactful or shocking—a strategy that Celsus refers to as *suspensio*.⁹⁹ It plays with the expectations of an audience, heightening their engagement and attentiveness.

⁹⁸ Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 202–03.

⁹⁹ Quintilian, *The Orator’s Education*, 9.2.22.

Gottsched defines *suspensio* (or delay) as a figure in which an oration begins from a remote or indirect point and proceeds through numerous digressions, so that the reader or listener cannot immediately grasp the poet's intention but must wait until the conclusion, where the meaning becomes clear, like finding the exit of a labyrinth.¹⁰⁰ This figure, when used effectively and in a manner that does not overly distract the audience, is particularly effective in capturing and maintaining the audience's attention.

In musical application, Scheibe and Forkel both follow Gottsched's definition of *suspensio*. Scheibe emphasizes that *suspensio* differs from *dubitatio*: it does not express uncertainty in the use of key or remote modulations, but rather a deliberate arrangement of material that withholds its meaning or is distinct from the main *Hauptsatz*. He gives examples that prioritize misdirection, such as a recitative opening with an instrumental prelude that seems unrelated until clarified by the singer's entry, or a concerto movement that begins with foreign, symphonic material before the solo instrument introduces its theme. This technique, Scheibe notes, heightens the listener's attentiveness.¹⁰¹ Forkel likewise stresses that *suspensio* conveys purposeful delay through numerous digressions rather than hesitation, uncertainty, or vexation (as in the *dubitatio*), as the true purpose of the passage is revealed only at its end.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Gottsched, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 391.

¹⁰¹ Scheibe, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, pp. 391–92.

¹⁰² Forkel, trans. Bartel, *Musica Poetica*, p. 392.

Part III: Artistic Research Case Studies

This study now turns fully to artistic research, applying and illustrating its proposed rhetorical approach where it ultimately must be realized: in the real-time act of performance. For the sake of methodological transparency, here I adopt the first person when describing how historical principles drawn from the framework in Part I and the inquiry of Part II inform an artistic reading in practice. To reiterate, this part is not intended to function as a parallel, “objective” demonstration that validates the framework’s claims or its relevance to HIP. Instead, it documents a process of practical exploration, offering a concrete example of how a present-day performer might work with the framework. Part III therefore acts as illustration that renders the framework perceptible in practice, tracing how its concepts inform interpretive decisions, embodied modes of delivery, and acts of evaluative judgement under contemporary conditions. Classical rhetoric in the eighteenth century, as the earlier chapters have argued, was not merely a set of abstract concepts but a practical, embodied discipline. Its relevance to a culture preoccupied with sensibility, imagination, taste, and genius, arguably, cannot be fully understood through textual analysis alone. The case studies therefore treat performance itself as a method of illustration and inquiry. It is here—in the real-time moment of expression—that the aesthetic ideals of the past confront the perceptual and affective realities of the present.

In my own personal engagement and approach to HIP, I have always strongly believed that the metaphorical “proof is in the pudding.” The idiom is telling precisely because it insists on a kind of knowledge that cannot be arrived at abstractly. A recipe can describe ingredients and methods at length, but a cook only truly knows what was made by tasting the finished dish and deciding if it was good. Nevertheless, writing about this artistic process is inherently difficult, not least because it involves an enormous number of decisions at every moment so that the experience becomes an intricate and largely nonverbal psychological process. The purpose of the case studies, then, is not to claim a complete transcription of inner experience, but to offer a glimpse into how such decisions can be generated, tested, and refined from within the rhetorical framework developed above. In the end, the aesthetic success of these ideas must be judged in the products they help to produce: the performances themselves. If the argument of this study has value, it should be audible (and in some cases visible) in those results, which—like the pudding—speak for themselves.

This artistic research is structured through four interrelated case studies, each contributing progressively to the study’s vision of rhetorical performance in music. Case Study 1 explores eighteenth-century elocutionary training through declamation, using the speech-inflection method of John Walker. Case Study 2 moves from voice to gesture, engaging with Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806) to train the mind and body in eighteenth-century acting. Case Study 3 transitions to understanding how to create sentimental narrative in solo musical performance by examining a 1783 article by Johann Nikolaus Forkel which analyzes a sonata by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. Finally, Case

Study 4 focuses on performing Ludwig van Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, integrating the tools and training of the previous studies into a full-scale musical interpretation, testing how rhetorical embodiment and the aesthetics of sensibility could shape musical painting and affective delivery in a canonical work.

Essentially, these case studies form successive stages within a single, cohesive process. The first stage cultivates corporeal eloquence and—using Alexander Gerard's terms—refines artistic “genius” by disciplining imagination through taste. Each phase builds on the last: elocution trains the voice to locate and vary emotional colour; gesture trains the body to further render those affects legible in the full frame; and solo performance integrates these embodied resources into musical decision-making in real time. Underpinning the process is the premise that genius is something educable: imagination and taste can be cultivated through practices that shape not only what a performer does, but also how they feel and perceive.

The overarching aim, then, is for me to use these experiments to establish a reflexive coupling between inner feeling and outward sign—an interaction sustained through the feedback loop Aaron Hill called the “Mazy Round,” in which expression is continually adjusted in response to *telos* and *kairos*. From these principles emerges what this study terms the “feeling musician”: an interpreter who reads the score sympathetically, assumes rhetorical agency, expresses eloquently and sublimely, and co-creates with the composer to realize a work's expressive end in the here-and-now. To these ends, this way of working creatively in HIP offers an alternative to interpretive approaches that foreground mechanism, textual literalism, or affective detachment. I propose instead a model in which historical techniques function as catalysts for shaping my expressive voice and agency.

9. Case Study 1: John Walker's Declamation Pedagogy

This first case study begins by exploring musical elements in eighteenth-century declamatory practice. It is drawn from a pedagogical source: John Walker's *Melody of Speaking Delineated, or Elocution taught like Music* (1787). This beginner-friendly book focuses specifically on the musical aspects of declamation, including the melody and rhythm of speech. It includes various excerpts from English literature and political discourse, notated with Walker's special instructions to practice a melodious delivery. Due to its frequent references to other material, this short method is intended to be supplemented by Walker's earlier publications: namely his *Elements of Elocution* (1781) and *Rhetorical Grammar* (1785).

Walker's instructions can be interpreted iteratively, whereby the various components of a just declamation are isolated into specific exercises. This begins with two elements of rhetorical grammar: firstly, rhetorical pronunciation, which deals with the careful management of pitch and inflection in the voice; and secondly, rhetorical accent and emphasis, whereby rhythm, articulation, and hierarchical emphasis are addressed. Finally, Walker annotates the various passions which should be expressed in each section of the text and gives specific instructions of the various modifications of the voice associated with each; however, he stops short in the first exercises in explaining "the art of acting," and leaves that for more advanced students. Thus, *The Melody of Speaking* begins with more mechanical techniques, shaping outward signs of the orator, and gradually introduces more imaginative involvement. Similarly to Lessing's notion of corporeal eloquence, Walker treats declamatory pedagogy as a kind of 'solfeggio of the body,' in which students slowly learn to couple outward vocal and gestural signs to inner feelings, cultivating a taste for those forms of corporeal eloquence that make feeling legible to others. In this study, these "cultivated" intuitions will eventually become transferable to other media such as musical performance.

9.1 Inflections of Speech

Walker perceived speech as a combination of speaking and singing sounds. Singing sounds linger on the pitches of a musical scale, and leap between them, like playing different notes on a harpsichord, while speaking sounds slide "upwards or downwards to the neighboring notes without any rest on any," just like the sound produced by a violin "when the finger slides up and down the string while the bow is drawn across it." Speech should be a combination of both types of sounds to create the most beauty and variety.¹

Within the realm of speaking sounds, Walker denotes several distinct slides of pitch or *inflections*: the rising and the falling inflection. In his notation, these are denoted by an acute accent / and grave \ respectively written over the vowel of the accented syllable. For instance:

¹ John Walker. *The Melody of Speaking Delineated; or Elocution Taught like Music Visible Signs* (London: 1787), pp. 7–8.

Súch plays alòne should pleàse a British ear,

As Cáto's sèlf had nòt disdáined to hèar.²

When these inflections are spoken, they slide in pitch along an interval within the gamut of the speaker's voice and should only be applied to the accented syllable where they are placed, lest the speaker wish to sound like an approaching fire truck siren. These slides augment the effectiveness of pauses, creating emphasis and melodiousness that increases the musicality and variety of speech. Just like an *appoggiatura* or *port de voix* in music, both the rising and falling slides are "necessarily louder at the beginning than at the end."³ Walker also defines two compound slides: the rising circumflex (marked v), made up of a falling then rising slide; and the falling circumflex (marked ^), made up of a rising then falling slide.⁴ The circumflexes seem to be primarily used as a sort of ornament to give certain words added colour. For instance, the rising circumflex can be "exemplified by the drawling tone we give some words spoken ironically,"⁵ and the falling circumflex can colour words with a turn, like "sword," "pearl", or "gold."⁶ According to Walker, "words adopt particular inflections, either according to the particular signification they bear, or as they are either differently arranged or connected with other words."⁷ The placement of slides structurally depends on the sentence structure being considered. Generally, every pause is preceded by an inflection, whose nature depends on the sentence's sense and structure.⁸ In basic examples, a comma, indicating incompleteness, would be preceded by a rising inflection, and a period would be preceded by a falling inflection. However, the vocal inflections implied by the punctuation of more complex sentence structures in the *style périodique*⁹ express greater continuity, dependence, and interrelation of ideas. In practising such patterns, the student is not merely executing abstract marks, but learning to feel how a shift in pitch contour can answer a shift in sense, so that the smallest inflection of the voice becomes a cultivated, clear outward sign.

An important singing sound described by Walker is the *monotone*, which Walker notates with a dash —. It is characterized by a "continuation or sameness of sound, like that produced by repeatedly striking a bell; it may be louder or softer, but continues in exactly the same pitch. The tone is peculiarly proper in grand and sublime descriptions."¹⁰ For instance, Walker presents the following example from Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

² Walker, *The Melody of Speaking Delineated*, p. 12.

³ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 67.

⁴ Walker, *The Melody of Speaking Delineated*, p. 8.

⁵ Ibid., p. 16.

⁶ Walker, *The Melody of Speaking Delineated*, p. 16.

⁷ Walker, *A Rhetorical Grammar*, p. 67.

⁸ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*. Vol. 1, p. 123.

⁹ See Chapter 7.3.2.

¹⁰ Walker, *The Melody of Speaking Delineated*, p. 15.

High on a throne of royal state, which far
 Outshone the wealth of Ormus or of Inde,
 Or whère the gōrgeous Eāst with rīchest hānd
 Shōw’rs on her kīngs barbāric pèarl and góld,
 Satan exalted sat—¹¹

Walker prescribes that the entire passage should be read in a monotone, with the exception of the words “pearl” and “gold” because as mentioned before, they adopt special colours when given a circumflex.

Recall that Sheridan and Lessing encouraged the speaker to deliver “trippingly on the tongue,” as was discussed in Chapter 7.3. Shakespeare’s use of “trippingly” suggests a light, skipping effect between words. Walker provides a similar explanation to his readers, introducing a notation of vertical bars to indicate how a sentence is divided into accented and unaccented sections.

Súch plays | alòne | should pleàse | a Brítish ear, |

As Cáto’s | sèlf | had nòt | disdáined | to hèar.¹²

In the provided example, the words with inflections are naturally accented, and these accents are present within every “measure” between the vertical bars, based on the metre of the text. Walker suggests running the unaccented words within each bar together. The marked accents will thus carry significant weight, while the words between the accented words will pass by lightly and triflingly without pausing. Articulations are then made in the spaces between these run-together words. These articulations can be produced by the tip of the tongue, allowing for a high degree of refinement and resulting in various shapes and contours within the poetry itself. Walker’s example is shown below, with the accented syllables shown in bold by the author for illustrative purposes:

Súch plays **alòne** should **pleàse** a **Brítis** hear,

As **Cáto**’s **sèlf** had **nòt** **disdáin**’d to **hèar**.

The speaker’s musical ear plays a crucial role in determining the proportions of an artful pronunciation. The musical rhythm that emerges from the prosody of the text, with its embedded hierarchical accents and emphases, is pleasing and harmonious. Such rhythmic training habituates the tongue, breath, and facial muscles to move with a certain springy ease, so that when the speaker genuinely feels agitation, lightness, or weight, these muscles will not impede the outward expression of these feelings. Thus, the feelings will transfer more clearly into the delivery.

¹¹ Walker, *Elements of elocution*. Vol. 1, p. 148.

¹² Walker, *The Melody of Speaking Delineated*, p. 12.

Clear and distinct articulation was crucial in the eighteenth century, when performers relied entirely on natural acoustics in un-amplified venues. For intelligibility, crisp articulation mattered far more than sheer volume. As Sheridan notes:

The quantity of sound, necessary to fill even a large space, is much smaller than is generally imagined; and to the being, well heard, and clearly understood, a good and distinct articulation, contributes more than power of voice. Possessed of that, a man with a weak voice, has infinite advantages over the strongest without it.¹³

He further warns that “he who is obliged to strain his voice, in order to be heard, will scarce articulate well,” since articulation is “of very delicate nature” and suffers when the voice is forced.¹⁴ Careful control of volume and pitch was thus essential for clear speech and vocal health. These insights also apply to early keyboard playing, where instruments produce clear but not loud sounds and suffer under excessive force. In both declamation and keyboard performance, finesse and clarity were essential guiding principles. In both domains, eloquence depends on this economy of means: a cultivated body that can project affect without strain, shaping consonants or keystrokes so that the listener hears not technical effort, but the clear outward trace of an inner motion; that is, unless the inner motion is one that is effortful, in which case, it should convey onto the outward expression. But the effort of the mechanical means of the body should not impede this coupling; hence, the need for training and practice of these techniques.

9.2 Walker’s Melody of Speech: Artistic Research Performance Example

Armed with the fundamental principles of Walker’s elocution method, the reader should be well-equipped to tackle one of Walker’s extended, notated excerpts. This case study delves into Walker’s exercise on “King Edward IV’s Speech Regretting the Murder of his Brother, Clarence,” from Shakespeare’s tragedy, *Richard III*. In the scene, King Edward IV, deceived into ordering the execution of his brother Clarence on false pretenses, is unable to rescind the order in time to save his unfortunate brother. Overwhelmed with remorse for his error, he confronts his subordinates and reproaches them for not advising him wisely to prevent the murder.

9.2.1 Interpreting the Primary Source

In this section, I will explain how I approached performing the scene, combining Walker’s instructions with my own interpretation and artistic imagination. As an eighteenth-century master of elocution, Walker was deeply concerned with “saying the lines” effectively and cultivating this in the taste of his students. His text includes detailed notation indicating inflections, rhythms, tones, and affects in the sentimental narrative, allowing the student to read it much like a piece of music. Because managing all these elements at once is challenging, it is best to isolate and practice them individually until, through

¹³ Sheridan, *A Course of Lectures on Elocution*, p. 97.

¹⁴ Ibid.

practice and memorization, they become intuitive and second nature—much like preparing a musical performance. The point of this gradual accretion of skills is not merely technical fluency, but the slow formation of rhetorical habits: patterns by which sensation, judgment, and muscular response begin to cohere, so that the same organism that has learned to “speak” remorse, pity, or resentment can later “phrase” these affects at the keyboard.

Figure 4. King Edward IV's Speech from *The Melody of Speaking Delineated* (1787).

KING EDWARD IV's SPEECH
Regretting the Murder of his Brother CLARENCE,
SHAKESPEARE, Richard the Third,
STANLEY and EDWARD.

Stan. A boon, my sovereign | for my service | done.

K. Ed. I pr'y' thee | peace, | my soul | is full | of sorrow. |

Stan. I will not | rise | unless | your highness | hear me. |

K. Edw. Then say | at once, | what is it | thou request'st? |

Stan. The forfeit, sovereign, | of my servant's | life: |
 Who slew | to day | a riotous | gentleman, |
 Lately | attendant | on the duke | of Norfolk. |

(*Remorse; low tone.*)

K. Edw. Have | I a tongue | to doom | my brother's | death |

And shall | that tongue | give pardon | to a slave? |

(*Pity.*)

(Pity.)

My bróther | kill'd nò man, | his fault | was thòught, |
And yèt | his púnishment | was bitter | dèath. |

(Resentment, mixed with remorse.)

Whó su'd to me | for him ? | whò | in my wráth, |
Knèel'd | at my fèet, | and bíd me | be advis'd ? |
Whò | spòke of brótherhood ? | whò | spòke of lòve ? |

(Sorrow, pity, and compassion.)

Whó told me | how the pòor | sòul | did forsáke |
The mighty | Wárwick, | and did fight | for mè ? |
Whó told me | in the field | of Téwksbury, |
When 'Oxford | hàd me | dówn, | hè | rescu'd me, |
And sàid | 'dèar | bróther, | live, | and be a king ? |
Whó told me, | when we bòth | lāy | in the field, |
Frózen | almòst | to dèath, | how he did lāp me |
'Even | in his gárments, | and did gíve himself, |
All thìn | and náked, | to the nímph | còld | night ? |

(Resentment; loud, forcible tone.)

All this | from my remémbrance | brútiſh | wráth |
Sinfully | plúck'd, | and not a mán of you |
Háð sò much | gráce | to pút it | in my mind.

(Indignation, mixed with hatred; low tone.)

Bút, | when your cárters, | or your wáiting vassáls, |
Have dònè | a drúnken | sláughter, | and defac'd |
The précious | image | of our dèar | Redéemer, |

(Over-acted earnest entreaty; high tone.)

You stráight | are on your knées | for pàrdon, | pàrdon
And I, | unjústly too | must grànt it you: | —

(Resentment;

(Resentment; forcible tone.)

Bút | for my bróther, | not a mán would speak, — |

(Remorse; lower tone.)

Nér I' | (ungrácious) | speak unto myself

(Pity; low tone.)

For him, | pòor | sòul, —

(Reproach; high tone.)

The pròdest | of you àll |
Have been behòlden to him | in his life, | —
Yet nòne of you | would ónce | plead for his life.

(Dread and terror; low tone.)

O' | Héav'n | I féar, | thy | jústice | will take hòld |
On mé, | and yóu, | and míne | and yòurs, for this, |
Alás ! | péor | Clàrence ! |

9.2.2 Finding Pitches and Tonalities

The first step I took was to identify the various tones within the pitch range of my voice: low, middle, and high. According to Walker, the middle pitch or “natural pitch” is that “most easy to himself and most agreeable to others,”¹⁵ which “he will most naturally fall into, and which he will have the most frequent occasion to use.”¹⁶ I interpreted this to be the natural pitch of my relaxed speaking voice. I also experimented by finding the comfortable range for speaking robustly in both my low and high tones without straining. I documented the approximate lowest note within each of these tonalities and checked against a keyboard instrument. I noticed that these ranges could sometimes shift on different days, but exact precision may not be necessary for these exercises.

Table 5. Low, middle, and high tone of the author.

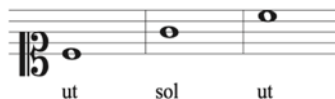
Tone	Note (in scientific pitch notation, A=430)	Note in Gamut
Middle tone (natural pitch)	G ₃	Ut
Low tone	D ₃	Sol
High tone	G ₃	Ut

From here, I can modulate from tonality to tonality while maintaining an interval “scale” of pitches within each key upon which the various slides of inflection can be practised.¹⁷ Since the range of my declamatory voice was approximately an octave between the low and high tone, I decided to depict my pitches in the soprano clef, and depicted my gamut appropriately in a 7-tone solmization, with the low “ut” corresponding to the base of the low tone, “sol” the approximate centre of the middle tone, and the high “ut” as the top of the high tone. There is likely some overlap between the tones, and the upper and lower ranges may drift up or down when impassioned, but in this case, an approximate pitch definition is suitable for the purposes of speaking where pitch precision is not as important as in singing.

¹⁵ Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 226.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁷ Although Walker does not explicitly mention an “oratorical octave”, the idea that declaimed speech can span (or should be restrained within) a defined vocal compass was actively discussed in other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings on delivery. Jed Wentz’s study shows how a marked-up 1685 *livret* for Quinault and Lully’s *Roland* can be read as a kind of declamation workbook: its dashes, dots, and occasional solmisation cues appear to trace oratorical “tons” (basic pitch levels) and inflected motion (including slide-like *ports de voix*) derived from Lully’s recitative, as if to distil a recoverable spoken *melopée* from the score. Wentz then situates this pitch-based declamation in a broader discourse that contrasts narrower, sermon-like practice with a more flexible theatrical style—one that could even press toward the “extraordinary” compass of the octave in moments of heightened passion, as later anecdotes about stage delivery suggest. Jed Wentz, “An Annotated *livret* of Lully’s *Roland* as a Source for Seventeenth-Century Declamation”, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 25/1 (2013), pp. 1–36.



Musical Example 43. The gamut of the speaking voice, showing low, middle, and high tones

Walker is quick to instruct students not to “confound high and low with loud and soft.”¹⁸ It is easy to accidentally slide into a higher tone when speaking loudly, but the defect of this practice is quickly understood when experienced. It is much harder to sustain a robust speaking voice in a high tone, and the strain on the voice leads to quick fatigue. Even if the situation calls for a vociferous passion to be expressed, the speaker must manage their voice to preserve it. Such awareness will certainly produce more noble and beautiful effects in an audience. After all, Walker claims rightly that in certain resonant spaces, “a loud and vociferous speaker will render himself unintelligible in proportion to his exertion of voice: as departing and commencing sounds will encounter each other, and defeat every intention of distinctness and harmony.”¹⁹ Lessing made a similar observation, stating that overly vociferous delivery offended the sensibilities of others, noting that there “are few voices that do not become obnoxious in their most extreme exertion [...] our ears should be injured.”²⁰ These principles reflect Gerard’s notion of the refinement of taste discussed in 5.2. Thus, a well-managed voice will always be more appealing to an audience, because of its elegance and nobility. There could be moments of extreme passionate exertion, but these must be considered in context of the whole, and anyone who has attended a play performance quickly realises the diminishing returns of constantly screaming actors. Learning to feel where my own vocal and bodily limits lie—and to keep most of my expressive work within a poised, sustainable range—is precisely how taste in corporeal eloquence is cultivated, and that same sense of proportion will later inform how a musician manages dynamic and registral extremes on an instrument.

9.2.3 Inflections, Timing, and Sentimental Narrative

As explained above, Walker shows the various inflections of the voice with accent symbols, which always fall on the emphatical syllable of each word, such that it takes an accent. The first lines of the speech proper, excluding the brief exchange with the servant, are:

Häve | I a tōngue | to dōom | my brōther’s | dēath |

According to Walker, the speaker should begin in a low tone, spoken with the monotone inflection indicated by the – accents, such that the same pitch is maintained across the entire line. The words with

¹⁸ Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 230.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 237.

²⁰ Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 5; 15 May 1767.

monotone indicated are accented, and thus the speaker should bounce from accent to accent, speaking “trippingly on the tongue.” For illustrative purposes, I again turn to musical notation:



Musical Example 44. First line of the speech notated musically.

The nature of the monotone has been shown with successive pitches persisting on the same note, and the slides of inflection are shown with appoggiaturas. Finally, the dashed slurs show where there are breaks in articulation as per the vertical bars in Walker’s notation. I found when I did it, as I approached the interrogation, I raised the level of the monotone by a tone at the end; hence, the indication in the musical notation above.

Walker describes the passion of “remorse” as follows:

Remorse, or a painful remembrance of criminal actions or pursuits, casts down the countenance, and clouds it with anxiety, hangs down the head, shakes it with regret, just raises the eyes as if to look up, and suddenly casts them down again, with sighs; the right-hand sometimes beats the breast, and the whole body writhes as with self-aversion. The voice has a harshness as in hatred, and inclines to a low and reproachful tone.²¹

Thus, the choice of a low monotone serves to portray remorse in sound. However, Walker suggests that the timbral characteristics of remorse can also be adopted. For instance, a harshness or raspy timbre could be used to represent the reproach towards oneself, as remorse evokes various impressions on the “soul.” I experimented with different sounds until I found one that resonated with my understanding of the passion. Recognizing how to identify such features and recalling their embodied states is a crucial process that will add variety and depth to a discourse.

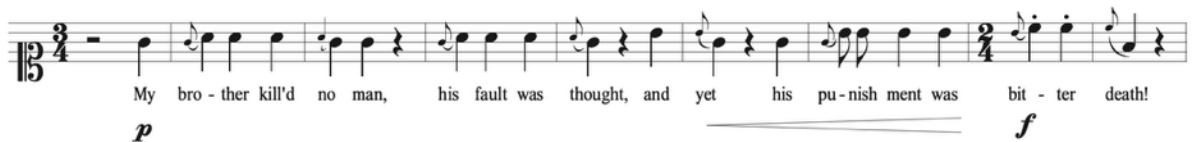
The next section marked “pity,” should then take a different tone entirely. Thus, a transition is made after the final word in the previous section, and the body must adopt a completely different configuration to produce a contrasting affect. Walker notates Pity in a middle tone in this passage, which is very comfortable for the voice and can produce a soothing quality. The line, which form a loose sentence, include various inflections, but the relative interval of the slide in proportion to the others is not notated and must be determined by the speaker.

My bróther | kill’d nò man, | his fault | was thóught, |

²¹ Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 341.

And yè | his púnishment | was bítter | dèath. |

Seeing that this is a loose sentence, with two members separated by a coordinating conjunction, I decided as per Walker's instructions that the first falling inflection on "thought" should be lesser in interval than the concluding falling inflection on "dèath," in order to give structure and variety to the entire sentence and produce a greater degree of finality at the period. Therefore, the two different rising inflections on "púnishment" and "bítter" may be used to reach a higher pitch to fall from a higher "height" on the word "death:"



Musical Example 45. Further lines with musical notation

In this section, the key has modulated from low to middle tone, so I began on "sol." I also thought of adding more dynamics to express the transition of thought that occurs within the frame of "pity." According to Walker, pity is expressed as follows:

Pity is benevolence to the afflicted. It is a mixture of love for an object that suffers, and a grief that we are not able to remove those suffering. It shows itself in a compassionate tenderness of voice; [...] A feeling of pain in the countenance, and a gentle raising and falling of the hands and the eyes, as if mourning over the unhappy object. The mouth is open, the eyebrows are drawn down, and the features contracted or drawn together.²²

The line begins soft, compassionately, and tenderly, reminiscing on Clarence, with a much gentler and more melodious, sorrowful recitation. However, when Clarence's punishment is recalled, there is a transition towards "mourning over the unhappy object." The cruelty of Clarence's fate brings more despair into the voice; however, still moderated by the gentler qualities of pity. Nevertheless, it is more energetic and harsher than the tenderer recollection it follows. I added a crescendo with a slight accelerando, and I switch the timbre to a sharper, more mincing pronunciation, exemplified by the word painting of "bitter" with agitated staccato on the double "t." In this desperation, I decided to rise to the high tone in order to fall a greater interval, even though it is not explicitly notated by Walker.

The next section begins with the following lines, marked "Resentment, mixed with remorse." Every word must be coloured by the tone of the passions but expressed in variety to avoid sameness of manner. Within the scope of resentment, this can range from the harshness and extroverted manner of reproach towards others, versus the more internalized hatred of self-aversion and despair that comes from shame and guilt for one's ill actions.

²² Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 308.

Whó su'd to me | for him? | whò | in my wráth, | Knèel'd | at my féet, | and bíd me | be
advised? | Whò | spoke of brótherhood? | whó | spoke of lòve? |

In this section, when King Edward addresses his nobles, I decided to turn my attention to the surrounding audience and direct the resentful questions towards them. Word painting, or lesser *hypotyposis*, can be employed. For instance, “wrath” may be spoken “wrathfully:” with a bold, powerful, authoritative yet threatening tone with a sharp attack on the consonant and a gravelly timbre on the vowel. With power and force, the commanding threat of a king should inspire fear and veneration in an audience, adding nobility and *gravitas* to the character, but screaming in an obnoxious manner would surely evoke ridicule and ruin the illusion of the scene. Hence, the appropriateness of the action determines its credibility in the context of the scene. Such appropriateness is not a purely rule-based matter, but rests on *kairos* and a refined feeling for when a gesture or tone still seems to grow out of the character’s inner state and when it tips into caricature—a sensibility that is equally crucial when shaping the “character” of a melodic line or harmonic turn in musical performance. Contrastingly, the two rhetorical questions “Whò | spoke of brótherhood? | whó | spoke of lòve?” can be delivered with the most impassioned recitation. “Whò | spoke of brótherhood?” with its upwards inflection becomes like a desperate plea, and the long vowel with falling inflection in “lòve?” that concludes the statement can take on the sound of a sob.

The next section is a nostalgic digression by King Edward, as he recalls fighting alongside his late brother in *Henry VI*. I chose to now divert my eyes away from the audience, and to take a more internal approach, as the character is now lost in his thoughts. However, the speaker here must employ *hypotyposis*, giving the audience the impression that they see all of the descriptive images presented in front of them, so vividly that the audience can nearly see them too. The passage is marked “sorrow, pity, and compassion,” and must adopt shades of these passions, but alternately, or mixed in various degrees at different points, to avoid a sameness of manner. The choice of how to apply these is not dictated by Walker and is left to the fancy of the performer’s imagination. I made choices that suited my fancy. For instance, I decided to draw out the long question statements, with the character of a beautiful sung lamentation, with long harmonious vowels and a flowing melody of inflections. For the most resonant and tuneful delivery, middle tone should be assumed.

Whó told me | how the pòor | sóul | did forsáke |
The mighty | Wárwick, | and did fíght | for mè? |
Whó told me | in the field | of Téwksbury, |
When Óxford | hàd me | dówn, | hè | réscu'd me, |
And sáid | dèar | bróther, | líve, | and be a kíng? |
Whó told me, | when we bōth | lāy | in the field, |
Frózen | almòst | to déath, | how he did láp me |

Éven | in his gàrments, | and did gíve himself, |
All thìn | and náked, | to the númb | cóld | nìght? |

When adopting the voice of Clarence in “dèar | bróther, | líve,” I decided to make the change of speaker more evident by changing to a more robust, hopeful, courageous middle tone: impersonating the imagined Clarence. This is followed by one of the most beautiful sections of the whole speech, beginning on “Whó told me, | when we bōth | lāy | in the fīeld, |” and adopting a monotone that climaxes on “Frózen | almòst | to déath.” Executing the monotone with resonant agogic accents, I decided to make a sort of *tempo rubato* by accelerating towards “Frózen,” and then making the landing more emphatic by relishing the stretch on the rising inflection that falls on the “ó” to draw out the desperation. I also decided to paint the word “Frózen” with some “shivering” with a trembling vibrato. However, this effect cannot be overdone because it quickly devolves into comedy if exaggerated. The next passage is the most sorrowful and pathetic, and the constant rising and falling inflections on “Éven,” “gàrments,” “gíve,” etc. create waves that accompany the gentle rising and falling of the eyes and hands associated with pity. The naked Clarence lying in the field after the battle who gave his garments to his brother to keep him warm is certainly a most pitiable image, and the gentleness and sorrow accompanying these lines can be intense in its softness, such that the audience can almost see this image in front of the actor. In this way, it is an intensity brought about by extreme tenderness and shows that intensity does not always mean loud or boisterous delivery. The nuance and sensitivity with which passions are performed separates the good actor from the great. This nuanced handling of intensity—finding degrees of softness, gradations of colour, and finely shaded transitions between affects—prepares the performer for analogous work with timbre, voicing, and tempo rubato at the instrument, where comparable decisions about “how much” and “how far” must likewise be governed by taste.

The next section begins with an abrupt transition: King Edward snaps back to the present after his nostalgic retreat and reproaches his nobles once more, but with greater vehemence and agitation than before. I decided to immediately turn back to address my nobles with “resentment;” in a “loud, forcible tone:”

All thís | from my remémbrance | brùtish | wráth |
Sínfully | plúck’d, | and not a mán of you|
Had sò much | gráce | to pút it | in my mìnd. |

This section gives ample opportunity for the performer to play with Shakespeare’s mastery of percussive rhythms in the English language. The words “brùtish | wráth | Sínfully | plúck’d” are all emphatic, and each can take a strong accent and double consonant for spiteful, spitting, bitterness. Again, the section ends with a conclusive downward inflection on “mìnd.”

This section is followed with an indignant monotone, that builds in intensity into a furious reproach, that when executed well, can send chills through an audience or leave them seized in terror:

(Indignation, mixed with hatred; low tone.)

Bût, | when your cārters, | or your wāiting vassals, |
Have dōne | a drūken | slāughter, | and defāc'd |
The prēcious | ĩmage | of our dèar | Redéemer, |

Although the monotone remains on one pitch throughout, it is possible to slowly raise the pitch in steps to create a gradation and climax. Hence, while beginning in the lowest tone on “Bût,” one could dwell on a single tone (“ut”) until the comma, and then continue on the pitch one tone above the former (“re”), such that the pitch rises in steps towards “sol” by the time it reaches the dramatic interruption in “dèar | Redéemer,” whose upward inflection can launch the speaker into the high tone for the next section. Combining a mixture of breath control and *accelerando*, the momentum of this entire section can build an extreme amount of terrifying intensity, the vehemence and hatred of which should frighten the listener. This brings the speaker to the climax of this passage:

(Over-acted earnest entreaty; high tone.)

You strāight | are on your knêes | for pârdon, | pârdon |
And Í, | unjústly too | must grànt it you: – |

Many words in the section, including the repetition of “pârdon, | pârdon,” is marked by circumflex, which gives the speaker an opportunity to use the mocking or chiding sound of this compound to fling spite upon their opponent. As well, interpreting it as a rhetorical figure, I decided to make the interval of the repeated circumflex much larger than the first, and the greater traversal of pitches stretches the word agogically even further, making it very empathic.

After the decisive downward inflection on “grànt,” a semi-denouement begins, where the king’s indignant anger subsides slowly in a long transition towards intense pity, which is accompanied by a general modulation downwards into the low tone:

(Resentment; forcible tone.)

Bût | for my bróther, | not a mán would speak, – |

(Remorse; lower tone.)

Nor Í | (ungrácious) | speak unto myself

(Pity; low tone)

For him, | pòor | sòul, – |

The lowest point of intensity comes with “pity.” In this short line, I thought that no bitter edge to the voice would be appropriate, and tried to once more find the round, tender quality of speaking. The round vowels on “pòor | sòul” make this possible, and they can be stretched in time to give them more poignance. The transition down tones and towards more subdued affects helps the actor internalize the changes in the body in steps, recalling the notion of emotional inertia, because jumping immediately

from the heights of outrage to pity would not only be jarring and perhaps ridiculous to an audience, but would be nearly impossible to perform, because such calm after a tempest cannot quickly be found. The actor has to use the transition to let their heartbeat subside in order to find the genuine feeling of each step in the transition. Perhaps in the heat of a performance, one might even dare to take the pity to an intense pianissimo, bringing even greater pathetic intensity in softness than could be achieved in loud outbursts and vociferations.

However, the king's calm is not to last. Here, at the dash, an abrupt, explosive transition must be made from a subdued tone of pity in the low pitch to a high-pitched reproach, once more turning towards the nobles to accuse them of their failure to preserve Clarence.

(Reproach; high tone.)

The proudest | of you àll |

Have been behòlden to him | in his life, | –

Yet nóne of you | would ónce | plead fòr his life.

Again, the abruptness of the transition ought not to appear ridiculous. The actor needs to “summon up the blood” to make such an abrupt transition to reproach possible. It has to be prepared in the silence between the sections and must be accompanied by suitable casts of the eye and bodily agitations before the first word of the new section is even uttered. The details of this type of physical acting will be discussed further in detail in the next case study, but here, it can be noted that even the mechanical actions of assuming different tones cannot be made easily without a proper transition.

The final section turns attention away from the nobles once more, but rather than remembering Clarence, King Edward feels fear for the righteous justice heaven will inflict upon him for his crime. His attention is directed then upwards to the Heavens themselves.

(Dread and terror; low tone.)

Ò | Héav’n | I féar, | thỳ | jústice | will take hòld |

On mé, | and yóu, | and míne | and yòurs, for this, |

Alás! | póor | Clàrence! |

“Fear” and “Terror” are described by Walker as such:

Fear violent and sudden (horror), opens wide the eyes and mouth, shortens the nose, gives the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with deadly paleness, draws back the elbows parallel with the sides, lifts up the open hands with the fingers spread, to the height of the breast, at some distance before it, so as to shield it from the dreadful object. One foot is drawn back behind the other, so that the body seems shrinking from the danger, and putting itself in a posture for flight. The heart beats violently, the breath is fetched quick and short,

and the whole body is thrown into a general tremor. The voice is weak and trembling, the sentences are short, and the meaning confused and incoherent.²³

Therefore, the “confusion” of terror, which comes from the violent heartbeat and tremor, leads to short, sometimes broken sentences, with incoherent and confused pace. I interpreted this to mean making quick bursts of speech which confused pauses in between, and I found it much easier to improvise this in the moment, inspired by imagination, rather than trying to overly prescribe such execution. Combined with fetched, quick breathing, this effect is easily imitated in the delivery of this passage. A weakness to the voice and general trembling, which could manifest like a vocal vibrato, is also possible. But the actor must remember that they are playing a king, so overly ridiculous, frivolous, or comic actions would disrupt the nobility, sovereignty, and *gravitas* of such a character. Therefore, taste must moderate, and the audience will be convinced. Over time, repeated experiments of this sort—trying out different degrees of trembling, broken speech, or vocal weakness, then pruning back what seems excessive—give the performer an embodied sense of measure in affect, so that both speech and later musical *rubati* or agogic distortions can remain expressive without lapsing into mannerism.

Walker’s exercise introduces students to the basic mechanics of rhetorical delivery—pauses, inflections, tempo, and tone—applied systematically to a character’s intended affect. I have also shown how such instructions resemble a musical score, offering a scripted imitation of expressive modes. Yet this mostly “outside-in” training remains far from the ideal of sentimental acting. For both actors and musicians, rhetoric is more than a set of mechanical performance directions; it is communicative agency. While *The Melody of Speaking* offers valuable exercises, they are only rudimentary steps toward rhetorical performance. Such exercises, which are somewhat mechanical in nature, should not be confused for fully fledged acting; however, they are important ones for forming corporeal eloquence in the student. From this perspective, elocution lessons are less a detachable prelude to “real” acting or music-making than a laboratory in which the body learns to couple inner feelings and outward signs with increasing subtlety. When musicians submit themselves to this discipline of declamation, they are effectively rehearsing the same pathways that will later govern timing, touch, and phrasing, so that musical performance can become not the repetition of fixed instructions, but the audible unfolding of felt thought.

²³ Walker, *Elements of Elocution* Vol. II, p. 328.

10. Case Study 2: Rhetorical Gesture in Gilbert Austin's Pedagogy

Case study 2 introduces rhetorical gesture and acting. Both belong to the wider practice of embodied delivery in the period, sharing much conceptual ground with music in the period. This case study foregrounds the cultivation of an eloquent bodily mode of expression that channels sensibility through motion, emotional inertia, timing, and vocal colour.¹ I hope that once this eloquence is embodied it should become reflexive, later becoming directly useful for musical “painting”² in delivery.

The case study centres around the sympathetic interpretation of two excerpts from some of the most famous English sentimental lyric poems of the eighteenth century: firstly, Thomas Gray's (1716–1777) *Elegy in a Country Church Courtyard* (1750), which is a sombre reflection on the plight of the forgotten generations of villagers who lay buried within the pastoral graveyard, and secondly, Edward Young's *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* (1742–45), a monumental meditative poem that contemplates mortality, the soul, and the eternal. As Daniel Hertz and Bruce Alan Brown note, *Night Thoughts* was an important artistic and aesthetic influence on the mid-to-late eighteenth-century German *Sturm und Drang* literature and music.³ The performance of these two works is informed by Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia, or a Treatise on Rhetorical Delivery* (1806), where these excerpts are given with performance instructions using Austin's notation of gesture.

What is presented here is not simply a reading of poetry, but a performance that evokes heightened sentimental expression through the whole body: the coordinated shaping of vocal colour, tempo, and physical gesture. Where Walker's exercises chiefly discipline the melodious voice, Austin's poems draw the student into a next level of corporeal eloquence, in which passions are brought into the entire frame—through weight, balance, tactility, and the sensory orientation of the body in space. While partially prescribed by Austin's notated gestures, the performance also demands sympathetic interpretation to realize the ideas in the imagination and bring them into the outward expression. The result aims to invite the audience to share in the feeling of the emotional weight of each image and reflection. In doing so, these exercises train the performer to let inner images and sentiments find outward form not only in sound but in gesture, attitude, and the sensory “placing” of objects in space, so that *hypotyposis* becomes a fully multimodal event of motion and sensation. Thus, I predict that this training in fully embodied delivery will establish habits that can later be translated into musical performance.

Austin's *Chironomia* (1806) is one of the most ambitious attempts of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to codify and teach the art of gesture as an integral component of rhetorical

¹ See Chapter 4.1.3

² See Chapter 3.4.

³ Daniel Hertz and Bruce Alan Brown. “Sturm und Drang”, *Grove Music Online*. 2001. Accessed 30 Jan. 2026. <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027035>.

delivery. An Irish schoolmaster and clergyman, Austin worked in Dublin and also ran a school in the countryside outside of Maynooth where he sought to prepare schoolboys not only in the scholastic principles of classical oratory but also in the practical arts of declamation and public speaking.⁴ While drawing deeply on the ancient rhetorical tradition of Cicero and Quintilian, Austin's work is equally a product of his own time, informed by the theatrical culture of the late eighteenth century and inspired by the performances of actors such as John Philip Kemble.⁵ In the treatise, Austin developed a system to make gesture and expressive action pedagogically teachable, so that students could develop both technical command and a cultivated taste in this expanded, whole-body eloquence. Austin's *Chironomia* appeared in German translation by Christian Friedrich Michaelis as *Die Kunst der rednerischen und theatralischen Declamation* (Leipzig: Baumgärtner, 1818) which includes German adaptations of a selection of the poetic excerpts and plates.

In the preface to *Chironomia*, Austin explains his motivation: the “laborious duty of teaching declamation” led him to devise a set of “permanent marks” by which he could “record, and communicate in writing, with brevity and precision” his ideas about proper delivery. He describes how, through considerable labour, he “succeeded [...] in the invention and arrangement of a notation applicable to my purposes; and proved its advantages by the test of my own experience.”⁶ Austin's notation system is remarkably comprehensive, offering written symbols for the movement of the eyes, the placement and motion of the feet, the positioning and trajectory of the hands, and the timing of significant gestures. His diagrams and shorthand symbols function much like a musical score, allowing the teacher to record a detailed “choreography” of delivery that the student can follow, practice, and eventually internalize. The gestures are mapped onto an imagined sphere surrounding the orator, with various letters and marks designating positions and motions of the arms and hands, while other symbols indicate gaze, stance, and shifts of weight or foot placement. Voice indications—such as changes of force, emphasis, tempo, or pause—are placed in the margins, linking physical gesture to vocal expression. Like a kind of kinaesthetic solfeggio, the system is meant to be drilled until the written marks call forth reflexive sensations.

Dene Barnett's *The Art of Gesture* (1987) was a pioneering twentieth-century attempt to revive eighteenth-century acting and oratorical gesture, using sources like Austin's *Chironomia* to reconstruct what he believed to be a coherent system of delivery.⁷ Barnett's work—highly influential within early music and the broader HIP movement—brought interest to a wider HIP revival of “baroque acting.” This was a renewed interest in declamation, stage rhetoric, and historically framed gesture for

⁴ Jed Wentz, “Mechanical Rules Versus *Abnormis Gratia*: Revaluing Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia* (1806) as a Source for Historical Acting Techniques” in *Theatrical Heritage: Challenges and Opportunities*, Bruno Forment & Christel Stalpert, eds. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015), pp. 41–57.

⁵ Wentz, “Mechanical Rules Versus *Abnormis Gratia*: Revaluing Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia*”, p. 47.

⁶ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. iv.

⁷ Dene Barnett, *The art of Gesture: the Practice and Principles of 18th century Acting* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1987).

performers. In the decades since, this revival has grown into an ecosystem of training lineages and workshop cultures: for example, French “baroque theatre” circles associated with Eugène Green; choreographic and opera-stage reconstructions associated with Sigrid T’Hooft; historically oriented acting pedagogies circulating through early-opera studios and academies; and various other performer-teacher lineages drawing on gesture and dance. However, despite the convenience of the label “baroque gesture,” it proves very difficult to describe what any one of these “schools” stands for in a stable, reducible way. There is no modern monolithic practice of “baroque gesture,” but rather many different interpretations and approaches, each shaped by different repertoires, venues, audiences, and pedagogical aims. The point presented here is not to disdain these approaches (many have generated valuable artistic results and have productively reopened questions about embodiment, style, and legibility), but simply to clarify that the present study does not model itself on any one of them as a template.

Instead, this project returns to the sources and to the rhetorical framework developed throughout the study as its basis: not to extract a single “correct” gestural code, but to reconstruct the underlying logic by which eighteenth-century writers understood delivery to operate. This is important to note especially because Barnett’s pioneering codification is a site where later debates about rigidity versus flexibility tend to emerge. For example, Magnus Tessing Schneider critiques Barnett’s reception of *Chironomia*, arguing that Barnett reduces eighteenth-century gesture to a rigid, semiotic system of fixed signs, detached from the rhetorical and situational nuance emphasized by classical sources. In this view, Barnett’s approach bears some resemblance to the “rational affectivity” narrative in musicological readings of baroque rhetoric. Rather than treating Austin’s notation as a semiotic sign-language, Schneider calls for a more interpretive and context-sensitive approach that balances historical evidence with the expressive flexibility central to eighteenth-century performance.⁸

The current study aims to address these criticisms in HIP by engaging more deeply with creativity, imagination, and sensibility—qualities central to Austin’s intent but arguably largely overlooked by Barnett. While Austin’s choreographed examples are his own inventions, they arguably do not prescribe a rigid or inflexible system; rather, elocutionists saw rigorous training as a means to cultivate the student’s corporeal eloquence. Over time, this training yields a mnemonic, affectively rich vocabulary of gestures. This includes *significant gestures*, which communicate clear rhetorical meaning like a specific passion or behaviour (usually derived from specific natural signs of the passions), and *insignificant gestures*, which add grace or rhythmic emphasis to speech but have no specific meaning that is independent of context—that the speaker can draw upon for both planned delivery and spontaneous improvisation. Furthermore, taking the perspective of the aesthetic psychology outlined in

⁸ See Magnus Tessing Schneider, “Contemporaneity in Historically Informed Performance”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 81–110.

Part I of this study, Austin's gestures should not be treated as fixed, mechanical signs but as rhetorical commonplaces, as Gerard defines them: starting points that activate the imagination and guide expressive invention. They offer prompts and constraints that help generate legible, persuasive action, while still allowing the performer to shape meaning as fluidly as tone, pacing, emphasis, or diction. In this sense, the goal is not to reproduce "baroque gesture" as a monolith, nor to align with any one modern HIP acting school, but to rebuild the rhetorical conditions under which gesture could be taught, varied, personalized, and made persuasive in performance.

However, in the overall context of this study, which deals with the rhetorical performance of music, the relevance of Austin's approach extends beyond speech. For the musician, having rhetorical agency as a "musical painter" in Engel's terms requires a cross-sensory language, in which motions and embodied action can be sentimentally depicted in musical *topoi*. In this way, the movement and stroke of an orator's arm have direct parallels in the rise and fall of a melodic line or the shaping of harmonic weight. In my reading, rhetorical gesture not only amplifies text but also lends it beauty, magnificence, structure, emotional force, and sublimity. Crucially, it could fix these emotive patterns in bodily memory.

Austin's concept of "periods of gesture" describes sequences of subordinate gestures whose strokes are synchronized to the spoken words. Here, gestures can initiate, distinguish, alternate, suspend, or conclude a thought. This concept parallels the structure of language and makes it visually legible, much as cadences and phrase-arches make musical discourse legible to the ear.⁹ Moreover, just like musical melody, the qualities of the hand motions themselves—their direction, force, rhythm, preparation, accentuation, speed, acceleration, tempo, and rebound—add sentimental character, connecting the prosody of language to a pathos-laden kind of "melodic rubato" that comes from emotional inertia. In Engel's description of musical painting, this colouring of sentimental meaning through motion is essential, for each passion carries a distinctive tempo and emotional inertia.¹⁰ By embodying these patterns as an orator, the performer again could learn to inhabit the emotional states in both the mind and the whole body and internalizes the transitions that define persuasive and moving delivery. Since emotions themselves involve movement—shifts of energy, pulses of intensity—it is natural that gesture and bodily motion should be interwoven with the language of sentiments, just as music itself is. For the rhetorical performer, engaging with Austin's gestural vocabulary not only could sharpen conceptual understanding but also could deepen the embodied imagination, stocking memory with a repertoire of affective outward signs.

⁹ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 387.

¹⁰ See Chapter 4.2.2.

10.1 Austin's Notation

In *Chironomia*, Gilbert Austin devised a systematic notation to record and teach the gestures of the hands with remarkable precision. At its core, this notation employs a sequence of three to five lowercase letters, each representing a specific aspect of a gesture. When applied to a text, these notations are written above the words where the principal stroke of the gesture falls, indicating the exact moment of delivery. The right hand is always treated as primary, embodying the principal expressive movements, while the left hand functions in a subordinate, shadowing role.¹¹ As such, the notations above the text refer to the right hand, and gestures for the left are marked separately, often preceded by a dash to show their connection to the right-hand motion. Each of these different characteristics is described in detail in the body of Austin's treatise, with accompanying plates.

The sequence of letters describes the gesture's form in layers. The first letter denotes the hand's orientation, with symbols such as (*n*) for natural, (*p*) for prone, (*s*) for supine, and others. As Austin describes, these positions show how the palm should be presented to the audiences.¹²



Figure 5. Gilbert Austin's hand positions in the plates from *Chironomia* (1806) from left to right: natural, prone, and supine.

The second letter designates the height or plane of the arm, beginning with (*R*) for resting, then (*d*) downward, (*h*) horizontal, (*e*) elevated, and (*Z*) zenith. The third letter specifies the direction in the lateral plane, ranging from (*c*) across, (*f*) forward, (*q*) oblique, (*x*) extended and (*b*) backward. These coordinates are shown in the plate below:

¹¹ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 398.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 393.

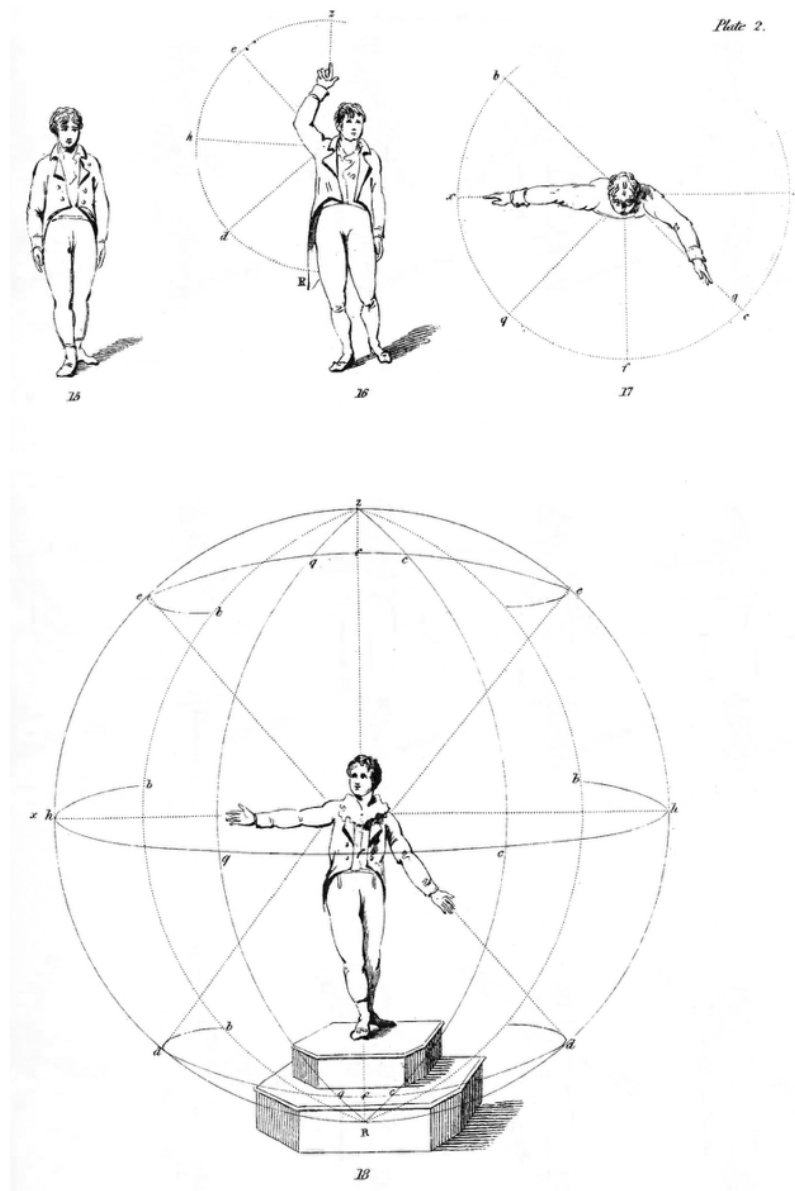


Figure 6. Austin's arm position coordinates in *Chironomia* (1806).

A fourth letter and sometimes fifth letter—which can be optional—can indicate the direction of motion leading into the gesture, for example, (*a*) advancing, (*d*) descending, etc. The fourth and fifth letter may instead indicate a gesture's manner of movement, with examples including (*p*) for pushing, (*sp*) for springing, or (*st*) for striking. When a significant gesture is called for, a special code is used instead of this sequence: for example, (*Ap.*) appealing, (*Ls.*) listening, (*Pr.*) pride, (*Sh.*) shame, (*Hr.*) horror, (*Gr.*) grief, and others. Austin also mentions in his treatises other attitudes which he does not give notations for, but would surely be useful, like puzzling, deliberation, and distress. These significant gestures often assume a specific attitude and characteristic motion, which Austin describes in a taxonomy drawing on a variety of other sources including Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785).



Figure 7. Examples of significant gestures depicted in Austin's *Chironomia* (1806). From the top left: appealing to heaven, listening, pride, shame, horror, puzzling, distress, deliberation.

In addition to hand and arm movements, Austin's notation also accounts for the position of the eyes and the footwork, both of which he considered vital to effective rhetorical delivery. Further codes placed slightly above the line record the direction and focus of the eyes, which usually relate to the *hypotyposis*, situating and tracking various sentimental objects in the scene described. These symbols instruct the speaker where to direct their gaze—(U) upward, (D) downward, (F) forward, or (A) averted. For Austin, the eyes are “windows of the soul,” capable of conveying emotion even before a word is spoken in response to a sentimental apprehension; thus, the coordination of gaze with gesture ensures that the performer's delivery communicates sincerity and emotional clarity. These are essential especially when delivering *hypotyposis*.¹³

Equally detailed is Austin's system for footwork, which is notated with letters placed below the text. These codes dictate how the orator should stand, shift weight, or advance and retreat during delivery. Central to his approach is the adaptation of *contrapposto*, a stance derived from ancient Greek sculpture and frequently seen in Renaissance and baroque painting. In *contrapposto*, the body's weight rests primarily on one leg, while the other leg is slightly bent or relaxed, causing a natural asymmetry

¹³ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 106.

that gives the body a sense of grace. This classical pose, celebrated for its combination of balance and movement, lends the orator a poised yet dynamic presence.



Figure 8. Various footwork notations shown in Austin's *Chironomia* (1806).

Austin's footwork notations include symbols for advancing or retreating with the right or left foot. These movements work in coordination with hand gestures and gaze to create a holistic, full-body corporeal eloquence, where the entire posture of the orator reinforces the emotional and intellectual content of the speech. In learning such footwork, the student also experiences directly how passions possess a kind of "emotional inertia" in the whole frame. By carefully "sculpting" the visual appearance of the eyes, hands, and feet into an expressive vocabulary, Austin's system teaches the orator to control the stage with a presence that unifies the noble simplicity of classical poise with the vitality and sublime spirit of the sentimental through voice and movement. A summary of the symbols is given in Austin's table below:

Alphabetical Arrangement of Symbolic Letters.

Above the Line. Hands, Arms, Body and Head.						Below the Line Feet.				
Small Letters relating to the Hand and Arm.					Capital B and double small Letters. Both Arms and both Hands.	Capitals for particular Parts.	Capitals for Head and Eyes.	Small Letters Steps.	Capitals Positions.	Capitals and small; significant Gestures.
1. Hand.	2. Elevation of the Arm.	3. Transverse Position of the Arm.	4 and 5. Motion and Force.							
A	- - -	- - -	ascending alternate	applied	- - -	{ assenting averted	advance	- - -	appealing attention admiration aversion	
B backwards	- - -	backwards	backwards beckoning	both	breast	- - -	- - -	both		
C clinched	- - -	across	collecting contracted clinching	crossed clasped	Chin	- - -	cross	- - -	commanding	
D	- - -	downwards	descending	- - -	- - -	{ down- wards denying	- - -	- - -	deprecation declaration	
E	- - -	elevated	- - -	encumbered	Eyes	erect	- - -	- - -	encourage- ment.	
F forwards	- - -	forwards	forwards flourish	folded	Forehead	Forward	- - -	front	fear	
G grasping	- - -	- - -	grasping	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Grief	
H holding	horizontal	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Horror	
I index	- - -	- - -	inwards	inclosed	- - -	inclined	- - -	- - -		
K	- - -	- - -	- - -	a kimbo	- - -	- - -	- - -	kneeling	{ Lamenta- tion Listening	
L collected	- - -	- - -	left	- - -	Lips	- - -	- - -	left		
M thumb	- - -	- - -	moderate	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -		
N natural inwards	- - -	- - -	noting	enumerating	Nose	- - -	- - -	- - -		
O outwards	- - -	- - -	outwards	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -		
P prone	- - -	- - -	{ pushing pressing	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Pride	
Q	- - -	oblique	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	oblique		
R	- - -	Rest	{ right re- coiling re- pressing rejecting	reposed	- - -	round	retire	right		
S supine	- - -	- - -	{ sweep springing, striking shaking	- - -	- - -	{ shaking aside	{ start stamp shock	side	shame	
T	- - -	- - -	{ touching throwing	- - -	- - -	Tossing	traverse	- - -	threatning	
U	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	Upwards	- - -	- - -		
V Vertical	- - -	- - -	revolving	- - -	- - -	Vacancy	- - -	- - -	Veneration	
W hollow	- - -	- - -	waving	wringing	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -		
X extended	- - -	extended	extreme	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -		
Z	- - -	Zenith	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -	- - -		

Figure 9. Austin's application of gestures summary given in *Chironomia* (1806)

10.2 The Timing and Stroke of Gesture

According to Austin, the stroke and timing of gesture are critical factors for achieving grace, nobility, and emphatic force in delivery. Gesture, for Austin, is never random or ornamental; it is intrinsically tied to the sense and prosody of the text it accompanies. Drawing upon Quintilian's directive, he stresses that the arm, as a compound instrument composed of various sections and joints, should move in a natural sequence: the motion should begin from the shoulder, continue through the elbow, and end with the hand and wrist, with the fingers completing the movement at the very end.¹⁴ This graduated and deliberate motion gives gesture a clarity and dignity that is both visually pleasing and rhetorically effective. Here, Austin insists that the stroke of the gesture must align precisely with the emphasis of the voice, landing on the accented syllable of the word, so that "the emphatical force of the voice and

¹⁴ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 375

the stroke of the gesture co-operate in order to present the idea in the most lively and distinguished manner.”¹⁵ When such precision is lacking, he warns, “the arms seem to wander about in quest of some uncertain object, like a person groping in the dark; and the action is of that faulty kind, which is so called sawing the air,”¹⁶ a fault mocked by Shakespeare’s Hamlet in his famous admonition to the players. The preparation, stroke, and rebound of the arm are thus not only visual accents but also ways of managing the momentum of the entire body, so that the orator does not jerk from one passion to another but carries energy through the frame.

“Gesture used for the mere display of the person without reference to any other particular or decided meaning in its movements and changes, very soon disgusts,”¹⁷ Austin writes, emphasizing that effective gesture must be purposeful and not merely decorative. To this end, Austin’s acting method presents gesture as part of a holistic process of an inside-out first model of rhetorical delivery. The orator first conceives the idea in the imagination, then “seen in the eye” (i.e. the eyes move first) before its corresponding sentiment flows naturally animating the body and finally colouring the voice.¹⁸ In this model, gesture does not come independently from the thought, nor the words. In Austin’s account, the unity of thought, voice, and gesture would seem to concentrate expression into a single, coherent act—one that could likely intensify the delivery’s persuasive force and lend it greater *pathos*. Moreover, Austin observes that gesture often mirrors the inflections of the voice, frequently ascending when the pitch rises and descending when it falls.¹⁹ In this way, for Austin, gesture serves as an extension of rhetorical thought: a means of painting ideas in the air, making visible the cadences, emphases, and sentiments that the voice alone cannot fully convey.

This intimate coordination of mind, voice and gesture that Austin describes in his sentimental acting method parallels the expressive flexibility of the feeling musician, whose use of tempo rubato, agogic accentuation, and other interpretive devices arises from an immediate, sentimental engagement with the ideas he/she seeks to express. In this view, just as the orator’s gesture would respond to the shifting sentimental context of narrative, musical gestures, while often prescribed on a score, should emerge in real time, shaped by the performer’s sensibility and rhetorical awareness. The variations of gesture in Austin’s system—its rises, falls, preparations, and accents—are analogous to musical phrasing, articulation, and rhythm, which are likewise governed by prosody and rhetorical emphasis. Also incorporating Engel’s insight on emotional inertia, each idea the orator expresses carries its own characteristic rhythm and kinetic quality, which ought to be embodied by the rhetorical performer in the whole frame to be fully expressed. The same repertoire of kinetic “signatures” could then be redeployed in musical performance. For example, a slow, descending arm that once enacted grief can

¹⁵ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 376.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See p. 109 of this study.

¹⁹ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 376.

be reimagined as a dragging, sighing bass line; a springing, upward gesture of joy can be paralleled in the touch and timing of an arpeggiated chord, and countless other similarities can be drawn through this rhetorical “cross-pollination.”

Austin’s system reinforces this idea by cataloguing a wide range of distinct types of gesture movements—noting, pushing, waving, flourishing, sweeping, beckoning, repressing, advancing, springing, striking, pressing, recoiling, shaking, throwing, clinching, and collecting—each of which requires a sense of preparation and resolution.²⁰ These movements often involve a rhythmic “upbeat” and “downbeat” that synchronize with the stress of the metrical feet and natural tempo of the sentiment being conveyed. These all could offer striking analogues to the musician for expressing the nuances of sentiment. For the feeling musician, especially a keyboard player, the instrument becomes an extension of the body, as the philosopher Hegel described,²¹ capable of expressing the inner life of feeling. Just as Austin’s gestures vary in tempo, force, and articulation, so too can a musician shape musical figures through nuanced physical motions that produce expressive sound. For example, consider the simple act of a keyboard player spreading a chord: while impossible to notate exactly, its expressive quality—whether the arpeggiation is swift or languid, springing or pressing, accelerating or decelerating, soft or forceful—evokes the same palette of sentimentally-charged movements Austin describes. In this view, a chord can “spring” lightly like a joyful gesture, “strike” angrily with dramatic force, or “push” gently, expressing tenderness. Thus, taking this perspective both in rhetoric and in music, expression would emerge from the fusion of physical motion, emotional intent, and the shaping of time, forming a language of sentiment that could transcend mere technique.

10.3 Performing Gray’s Elegy

Lyric poetry comes from a long tradition of poetry whereby poems were intended to be declaimed aloud. Gray was reportedly “immersed in musical history, metre and Old Icelandic and Welsh poetry;” according to David Fairer:

Certainly, much of this verse benefits from being read aloud, and a silent reader has to work harder for the text’s aural qualities to come across. The reader’s imaginative and emotional engagement is in different ways assumed by the poet, who is often consciously exploiting the mechanisms of feeling. But this does not diminish the formal qualities of the verse.²²

Gray’s *Elegy* is quintessentially sentimental: the emotionality of the verse comes directly from reflections upon the many sensuous objects presented. From objects that can be seen: “The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed” (line 17); heard: “The curfew tolls the knell of parting day” (line 1); even smelled: “The breezy call of incense breathing morn,” (line 17); or felt: “For them no more the

²⁰ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 364.

²¹ See Chapter 6.2.

²² David Fairer, “Lyric Poetry: 1740–1790”, *The Cambridge History of English Poetry*, ed. Michael O’Neill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 397–98.

blazing hearth shall burn” (line 21). Gray builds up each scene by tantalizing the senses, and using *hypotyposis* to produce a “multimodal” experience. The progression from a somber evening meditation, to pity, to blissful yet bittersweet nostalgia, to the moralizing reproach towards the audience’s perceived disdain for the forgotten, and to the final calamitous judgement, every stanza of the poem is constructed carefully in this way, laying out the affect clearly. Such vivid imagery helps engage the orator to find that affect upon reflection, and the accompanying gestures by Austin help orient the objects in the scene. Austin’s excerpt is found below:

AN ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCH YARD.

GRAY.

I.

^{Ls} ^{veq—vbx} ^{a—} ^B ^{pef—} ^d
 The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
^{aR2}
^F ^{phf—} ^q ^x
 The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,
^{rR1}
 ^{—phf—} ^{—q} ^B ^{veq}
 The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
^V ^B ^{nef—} ^{d—} ^{B.R}
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

II.

^R ^B ^{phc—} ^{q—} ^x
 Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
^B ^{vef—} ^q
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
^{iec—} ^q
 Save where the beetle wheels his drony flight,
^{phf} ^{p—} ^R
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
^{aR2}

III.

^{—ieq} ⁿ
 Save that from yonder ivy mantl'd tow'r,
^R ¹
^{—veq} ^U ^{—seb}
 The moping owl does to the moon complain
^{rL1}
^{—shq}
 Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
^{—veq—} ^p
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

IV.

^{shf n — shf n}
 Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
^{Bbdf a ————— vhf}
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
^{D a ————— B nef sp ———}
 Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
^{F B phf ————— d ——— B.R}
 The rude fore-fathers of the hamlet sleep.

V.

^{shf—}
 The breezy call of incense breathing morn,
^{rR1}
^{ieq ————— a ————— n}
 The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
^{idq—}
^{veq w—}
 The cocks shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
^{a ————— B nef sp}
 Nor more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. ^{B sdf d}
aR2

VI.

^{shf n—}
 For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
^{rR1}
^{vhf—}
 Or busy housewife ply her ev'ning care;
^{B shf p}
 No children run to lisp their sire's return
^{aR2}
^{B nef a D F B shf n}
 Or climb his knees, the envied kiss to share.
rR1

VII.

^{phc ————— q}
 Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
^{sdf st}
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
^{sec sw ————— phq sp}
 How jocund did they drive their team a field!
^{ceb bn ————— chf st}
 How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

VIII.

^{ief}—————^{ihf n}—
 Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
^{rL1}
^{pef}—————^{pdf d}—
 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ;
^{oec}—————^{q rj}
 Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
^{rR1}
^a—————^{vef}—————^d — ^R
 The short and simple annals of the poor.

IX.

^{vef sp}—————^{ief fl}—
 The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
^{aR2}
^{B shf p}—————^q
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
^{B vhq sh}
 Await, alike, th' inevitable hour ;
^{rR1}
^a—————^{vef}—————^a—————^d ^{sdq n R}||
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave. ||
^{aR2}

X.

^{B phc}—————^q ^a—————^{shf n}—
 Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
^{rL1}
^{veq w}
 If mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise
^{L2}
^{vhf p}—————^{sec}—————^q
 Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault,
^a—————^{B nef}—————^a—————^d—————^{B.R}
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

XI.

^{ihf}— —^{vhq n}
 Can storied urn, or animated bust,
^{rR1}
ⁱ—————^{BL tc}—————^{oq}
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
^a—————^{veq}—————^d ^{sdf—R}
 Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
^{aR2}
^{B shf sh} ^a—————^{vef}—————^{vdf p}
 Or flatt'ry sooth the dull cold ear of death ?

XII.

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire :
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
 Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre

XIII.

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
 Rich with the spoils of time, did n'er unroll ;
 Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

XIV.

Full many a gem, of purest ray, serene,
 The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
 Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

XV.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest ;
 Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

XVI.

^{B shf p ————— q ————— x}
 Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
^{phf p ————— a a ————— vef — rj}
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
^{Bphc — q ————— Bvhx sp}
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
^{B shc ————— q ————— x}
 And read their history in a nation's eyes;

XVII.

^{phf st — R phc ————— q —}
 Their lot forbad: | nor circumscrib'd alone
^{————— x Bvhf rt}
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
^{B bdf ad ————— vhf ————— eb}
 Forbad to wade through slaughter to a throne,
^{B vhf p ————— a ————— d — BR.}
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

* * * * *

What follows is a detailed exploration of my interpretive approach to each stanza of Gray's *Elegy*, highlighting the most salient expressive elements that informed both vocal and gestural delivery. What follows is a stanza-by-stanza sentimental narrative that outlines how emotional colour, affective pacing, and visual rhetoric were combined to bring the poem's moral and sentimental force vividly to life.

The poem opens with a tranquil, melancholic meditation at dusk:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day, / The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea, / The plowman homeward plods his weary way, / And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

This opening exordium, which lasts for the first three stanzas, sets the emotional tone: solemn, innocent, and lethargic. The speaker surveys a sublime and picturesque rural landscape, where immensity and obscurity—hallmarks of the sublime—infuse the twilight scene. A listening gesture begins the performance, followed by *hypotyposis*: vivid gestures pointing to “the lowing herd” and “plowman.” The slow, weighted tempo of the voice and motion should mirror the weariness and emotional inertia of the scene.

The second stanza continues this mood of awe and stillness, with a subtle touch of comic innocence as the speaker gestures to follow the beetle's “drony flight,” capturing its gentle absurdity.

In my rendition, I let the arm's tracking gesture—given by Austin—take on a slightly playful inflection, so that it gently underlines the beetle's comic insignificance without disturbing the overall contemplative tone. The third stanza builds upon this affect, with descriptive imagery of an ancient church tower and a "moping owl" who "does to the moon complain." I afford the owl a kind of mock regality and perform this with mock seriousness, so as to preserve the innocence of the mood without tipping into grief.

A turning point emerges in stanza four, where the imagery becomes more overtly funereal:

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade, / Where heaves the turf in many a
mould'ring heap, / Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, / The rude forefathers of the hamlet
sleep.

Now, grief begins to deepen. I let my gestures shift to more resistant, shoveling motions on "heaves," and I use an upward motion on "narrow cell" to lend gravity to the idea of eternal burial. I let the final line end with my hands slowly descending in solemn resignation. Here, the main proposition of the excerpt that will be reinforced and refuted throughout is presented: that the humble, uncelebrated lives of the rural poor possess a quiet dignity that is no less worthy of respect than the fame or wealth of the powerful. Though these individuals lived in obscurity and left behind no grand monuments, their lives were marked by honest labour, familial love, and latent potential. The poem admonishes the reader not to mock their simplicity, but to recognize the shared fate that unites all humanity—death—and to reflect on the value of lives lived with integrity, however unseen.

From here, the poem pivots into the imagined past. In stanza five, we are briefly transported to the joys of a rustic life:

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn, / The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built
shed...

A retreating step follows the speaker's slipping into this nostalgic vision. Gestures become more animated and affectionate, but this joyful picture soon dissolves, as a pregnant silence between "horn" and "no more" brings the performer and audience back to the forlorn present reality of the grave. In shaping this moment, I deliberately stretch the silence, letting the hands fall still, so that the absence of gesture itself marks the painful snap back from imagined life to present death.

Stanza six heightens this nostalgia with touching family images—blazing hearths, busy housewives, children running to greet their father. Each line evokes pity, longing, and sentimentality. The final line, with its "envied kiss," is rendered in a caressing, collecting gesture that encapsulates the tender sorrow. I try to let this collecting movement feel almost like gathering a fragile, vanishing warmth into my hands, so that the gesture itself helps me find the pathos of the remembered kiss. Next, the poem turns to scenes of rustic labour. Stanza seven rejoices in images of agricultural vitality:

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield...

Here, the gestures mimic the physical actions: the sweep of a sickle, the breaking of soil, and the proud exertion of chopping wood. In performing these prescribed actions, I aim to keep them robust but unspectacular—firm enough to suggest honest exertion, yet restrained enough to avoid sliding into caricature of “peasant” energy. The tone combines cheerfulness and fortitude with reverence for the workers’ strength. In the next stanza though, the tone shifts again in stanza eight toward moralizing rebuke:

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil...

An admonishing gesture—projected index finger—scolds the audience for dismissing these simple lives. Rejection is dramatized with a hand pushing away the “disdainful” pre-judgement of the audience, while a softer tone returns on “the short and simple annals of the poor,” rendered with tenderness and humility. This tone continues as the speaker philosophizes:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow’r... / The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Mockery colours the first line, but the speaker soon grows more sincere, with a graceful opening of both palms to the reverence of “beauty.” In my delivery, I tilt the head and let the hand-opening on “beauty” and “grace” become slower and more expansive than Austin strictly requires, so that the same mechanical pattern acquires a more reverent hue. Suddenly, upon the realization of the universal fate, the speaker adopts a dreadful solemnity, adopting a dignified stance as they deliver the final line with austere sublimity.

The poem continues its moral instruction, asking whether commemorative art—“storied urn” or “animated bust”—can restore life. These rhetorical questions are marked by a tone of vexation and growing terror, particularly on “the dull cold ear of Death.” The confused pacing, stepping back and forth, and adopting an uneven tempo, depicts the dubitation inherent to this pondering. I consciously let the prescribed advances and retreats feel slightly unsteady here, so that the footwork itself begins to resemble anxious pacing, without breaking Austin’s overall decorum. However, in the following stanza, a new kind of tenderness is introduced as the speaker imagines a “neglected spot” where greatness may lie buried. The line “pregnant with celestial fire” explodes with agility, followed by imperial grandeur on “the rod of empire” with stately gestures, and then an ecstatic, almost frenzied release on “wak’d to ecstasy the living lyre” with a lively, forwards-thrown right hand. In this sequence, I intensify the contrast between these prescribed gestures: I treat the “celestial fire” as quick and bright, the “rod of empire” as grandiose and weightier in the arm, and the “living lyre” as ecstatic, almost impetuous, allowing my own muscular effort to mirror the rising excitement of the text.

But these poetic and political capacities were never realized, as stanza thirteen laments:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page / Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll...

Despair now overtakes ecstasy. The intensity of the previous stanza is maintained, but transformed into active grief, loud complaints and despair. The gestures here are more dignified, more measured, and lend nobility to the delivery. They suddenly become constrained and repressed, visually capturing the emotional freeze of "Penury" in their restricted, contracted forms. I try to feel this "freeze" quite literally in my body, so that the audience sees the gestures "caught" and held back, just as the poor are held back from realizing their potential.

What follows is one of the most poignant stanzas. The speaker evokes the image of firstly a hidden gem lost at the bottom of the sea. While the gem is met with awe, the "unfathom'd depths" are deep, obscure, and frightening. Secondly, the speaker presents a flower blooming unseen—perhaps a metaphor for a beautiful girl who dies before her time:

Full many a flow'r is born to blush unseen, / And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

This is delivered with utmost tenderness and pity, especially in the delicate supine palm gesture that represents the "wasted" beauty of the flower: the hand is next "discarded" to the extended right. For me, this prescribed sequence—offering, then discarding the supine hand—becomes the emotional climax of the excerpt; I slow the "discarding" just enough that it feels like reluctantly letting go of something precious, rather than a casual flick. It is the emotional climax—not loud, but profoundly affecting.

The next stanzas invoke lost potential:

Some village-Hampden... / Some mute inglorious Milton... / Some Cromwell guiltless of
his country's blood.

Here, bold gestures depict defiance and courage, only to recoil in revulsion at the spectre of Cromwell—a figure both powerful and morally repugnant in the eyes of the speaker. I sharpen the angles and force of the "village-Hampden" and "Milton" gestures, then deliberately let the Cromwell gesture falter into something more disgusted and withdrawn, so that the body itself betrays my moral discomfort. Next, in the penultimate stanzas of this excerpt, the tone returns to nobility and moral restraint. The speaker imagines what might have been: commanding senates, despising ruin, spreading plenty. These lines are marked by majestic gestures and a dignified bearing. I consciously broaden my stance and let the arms travel further across the imagined space, so that the same notated gestures acquire a more statesmanlike breadth. The last stanza in this performance ends with a forceful finality:

Their lot forbade... / And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

Here, the gesture strikes powerfully on "forbad," before pantomiming the closing of gates—an act that seals the fate of the forgotten and concludes the sentimental arc of the performance with gravity and

rhetorical resolve. At this point I let the “shutting” of the gates be terrifying and grandiose, feeling the resistance in my arms, so that the finality of the motion helps me experience the cruelty of the act from within.

10.4 Performing Young’s *Night Thoughts*

The following excerpt from Young’s *Night Thoughts*, as notated in Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806), represents the most advanced exercise in rhetorical gesture within Austin’s pedagogical system. It demands a high level of mastery, as the prescribed movements grow increasingly complex through their multiplicity. Beyond the technical demands of gesture, the passage poses a profound challenge for the performer: its sublime, often *Sturm und Drang* themes—touching on mortality, eternity, and the depths of human despair—require a gravitas and emotional conviction that tests the expressive capabilities of the student.

Figure 11. Excerpt from Young’s *Night Thoughts* as presented in Austin’s *Chironomia* (1806).

PASSAGE FROM YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS.

^U ^{vef n} ^F ^{B nef}
 The bell strikes one. We take no note of time
^{a R 2} ^{B shf st} ^U ^{ief—} ^{r R 1}
 But from its loss. To give it then a tongue
^{shf n—} ^V ^{B phq}
 Is wise in man. As if an angel spoke
^U ^{br—R} ^{ihf—}
 I feel the solemn sound. If heard aright,
^{ief—} ^{idq} ^{R st}
 It is the knell of my departed hours. 5
^R ^{B vhc} ^q ^{rt} ^{B vhf p}
 Where are they? with the years beyond the flood.
^V ^{ieq—} ^{phfst—}
 It is the signal that demands dispatch:
^{B phf x} ^{B vhf q} ^{a—}
 How much is to be done? My hopes and fears
^{—sp} ^a ^Z
 Start up alarm'd, and o'er life's narrow verge
^{a R 2}
 Look down.—On what? A fathomless abyss; 10
^D ^{B phf st} ^{B nef sp} [—]
[—] ^{B vef p} ^a ^{r R 1} ^{B R st}
 A dread eternity! how surely mine!
^{vef—} ^{br...}
 And can eternity belong to me,
^{.....} ^{— vef} ^{B nef} [—] ^{B R}
 Poor pensioner on the bounties of an hour?
^U ^{nef c—} ^F ^{shf st—} ^A ^{ohc—} ^{vhfc} ^F ^{B veq w}
 How poor, how rich; how abject, how august;
^{B vhc} [—] ^x
 How complicate, how wonderful is man? 15

U a ——— B vef sp ——— d B R
How passing wonder he who made him such?

B tc. br. ——— B nhx sp
Who center'd in our make such strange extremes

B vhc ——— q
From differing natures marvellously mix'd,

B nef rt ——— pefp ——— q
Connexion exquisite of distant worlds!

shf p ——— a ——— nef sp —
Distinguish'd link in being's endless chain

20

idf n ——— i Z —
Midway from nothing to the Deity!

U shf — vhf — vef
A beam ethereal sully'd and absorpt:

d ——— phf st ——— a ——— vef sp — vhx
Though sully'd and dishonour'd, still divine!

vhf c — U veq w —
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!

B nef ——— d ——— B sdf n
An heir of Glory! a frail child of dust!

25

F B phf U B veq sp D idf — U veq w —
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!

idf n — U vef sp B shf sh —
A worm, a God! I tremble at myself,

V B br vef — br
And in myself am lost. At home a stranger,

U F st — R ——— V vef sp — — vhx sp
Thought wanders up and down surpriz'd, aghast;

V B vhf sh B vec — x
And wondring at her own. How reason reels!

30

vef c — phf n — br — R
O what a miracle to man is man!

B veq w ——— B R vef sp — vhf sh —
Triumphantly distress'd; what joy, what dread!

B shf p ——— B vhf rt
Alternately transported and alarm'd.

B br r R 1 B vhc ——— x
What can preserve my life, or what destroy?

4 A

a ——— nef sp — d ——— pdf n
An angel's arm can't snatch me from the grave

B veq w ——— B nef ——— B sdf st
Legions of angels can't confine me there.

This passage demands a mastery of compound gestures and the ability to adapt them fluidly in real time in response to the performer's own sentiment. The text is rich with sublime imagery and moral contemplation, confronting themes of mortality, human frailty, and the paradox of man's dual nature as

both godlike and despicable. As such, it presents both technical and expressive challenges. Austin's system, which maps gesture, gaze, and vocal delivery to rhetorical effect, becomes here a springboard for deeper embodiment: not merely prescriptive, but rekindled through the imagination and affective faculties of the orator, drawing on tempo rubato, dynamic contrast, and spontaneous agogic flexibility to communicate living sentiment. What follows is my artistic interpretation of the poem and Austin's directions, beginning with the first line:

The Bell strikes One. We take no Note of Time / But from its Loss. To give it then a Tongue
/ Is wise in Man.

As Burke noted in his *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), "few things are more awful than the striking of a great clock [at night]."²³ The silence of the narrator's troubled sleep is sublimely interrupted by the perturbing chime of a great clock bell, signalling the passing of precious time—time the narrator does not have in great supply. The opening lines function as an *exordium*, establishing a grave, foreboding, dark, and gloomy atmosphere. The tolling of the bell evokes the inevitable passage of time and incites existential reflection. The orator glances upwards and gestures with a vertical palm toward the imagined bell, then addresses the audience directly, turning the gaze forward on "We." An open, supine gesture on "wise" connects man's prudence in marking time. In my performance, I let this supine gesture on "wise" become slightly more relaxed and expansive than the bare notation demands, so that it feels like a modest, almost rueful acknowledgement of human cleverness in the face of time's enormity. This brief note of levity, almost humorous in calling the clock's chime a "tongue," acts as a rhetorical *suspensio*, delaying the tension and the presentation of the main proposition momentarily — making the dread that follows all the more intense by contrast: that of moral urgency and the waiting abyss:

As if an Angel spoke, / I feel the solemn Sound... / Look down—on what? a fathomless
Abyss; / A dread Eternity! how surely mine!

This next section escalates in sentimental intensity. In order to evoke the dread of the angel's reckoning of Heaven, I assumed a low monotone. This tone, as noted by Walker, is associated with the natural sublime; namely, Burke notes that a "low, tremulous, intermitting sound [...] is productive of the sublime."²⁴ The toll of the bell becomes the "Knell" of the speaker's lost hours, a realization that sparks horror and self-reproach. A powerful ancient gesture referenced by Cicero—the striking of the thighs—emphasizes the line "It is the Knell of my departed Hours." When I execute this prescribed thigh-strike, I let the hands fall with a deliberately heavy, almost dull impact, so that the gesture reads less as theatrical flourish and more as a shocked, physical jolt of self-reproach. This gesture, if misapplied, risks absurdity, but here conveys existential anguish. As dread mounts, the orator uses gradatio in voice

²³ Burke, *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful*, p. 67.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

and rising gesture, culminating in a pantomime of teetering on the brink of a void. The speaker's "hopes and fears" are animated by a sudden upward start of the hands, presented vertically with splayed fingers, which then slowly rise as the voice ascends to the sublime dread of "a fathomless Abyss." I feel this ascent as a continuous drawing-up of energy through the arms and torso, allowing the prescribed upward trajectory to pull my whole body into the sensation of hanging over the precipice and gazing down at my fate in the fires of Hell in terror. The climax, "how surely mine!" is again punctuated with a thigh-strike of desperation. But from this apex, the energy subsides into a languid tenderness and an appeal to pity from the Almighty. The final rhetorical question—"And can Eternity belong to me, / Poor Pensioner on the Bounties of an Hour?"—is delivered as a plea, using the significant gesture of the "appeal to Heaven." Here I slow the upward appeal, softening the elbows and hands, so that the same codified gesture acquires a quality of helpless supplication rather than confident oratory. The gesture should now be slow and heavenward, the voice softened in tone, and smoother in timbre. This is followed by a long rhetorical pause after the *interrogatio* is invoked to the audience. The resultant aposiopesis invites a pause for audience reflection and a gentle transition to a new thematic proposition.

How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, / How complicate, how wonderful, is Man!...
/ A Worm! a God!—

Here the speaker turns from fear to philosophical awe, articulating man's paradoxical nature through a series of antitheses and exclamations. This section is technically demanding, requiring the orator to shift rapidly between opposing sentiments. Each adjective is matched with a distinct affective tone and gesture. Austin advised the orator to first conceive the impression of the idea in the mind, before then letting it affect the eye, before it then shapes the gesture and lastly, the voice.²⁵ Many of the antitheses are given with an eye movement, and by placing the disparate contrasts at different points in the space in front of the speaker, the orator can visually separate and distinguish these ideas to the audience, making the contrast spatial with the eyes and gesture, heightening the meaning further.

This challenge begins in the first line, where the speaker presents these antitheses in the form of *anaphora* and *gradatio*: "How poor, how rich, how abject, how august, / How complicate, how wonderful, is Man!" This requires very specific affective colouring for each member of the sentence, acting as an *anaphora* unified by *gradatio* towards a climax. For instance, man is poor, expressed with pity; man is rich, expressed with joy, man is abject expressed with aversion; man is august, expressed with fortitude and courage; man is complicate expressed as a *dubitatio* with perplexity; to the awe and admiration for the "wonder" of man. As I work through these members, I allow the same basic gestural schema to alter in weight and speed—lighter and more withdrawn for "poor," more buoyant and open for "rich," sharper and recoiling for "abject"—so that the audience can see the emotional contrasts I feel inside inscribed in my body. Each of these is accompanied by a suitable gesture which paints the

²⁵ See p. 109.

concept. For example, the retracted hands on “poor” express the smallness of pitiable man compared to God, with the eyes looking upwards. Suitable gestures, each using “how” as a preparatory upbeat, follow with increasing vehemence, until the line climaxes on the evocation of God: “HE who made him such.”

After this line, the energy here again can naturally dissipate, allowing the speaker to make a crescendo once more, beginning a new *gradatio* that climaxes at “*nothing* to the *Deity*.” The next lines again veer into contemplation: expressed via *dubitatio*, the speaker marvels at this ambivalent state of man. Again, the speaker can begin small again, expressing divine admiration for the “beam ethereal” with open supine hand, next feeling aversion to its sully. Another *gradatio* then begins, again presenting various antitheses with increasing vehemence. The most intensity occurs at the climax: “Insect *infinite*! A Worm! a God!—” Again, these antitheses portray stark opposites, and the detestable and miserable worm, gestured to on the ground with a protruded index finger, contrasts greatly to that of God, who is met with great reverence, wonder, and fear, with a gesture to the heavens. Here I try to exaggerate the vertical distance between these two prescribed gestures—the low, stabbing indication of the worm, and the high, expansive gesture to God—so that the sheer spatial gap helps communicate the conceptual chasm. Once more, after this climax, the energy dissipates in a sort of *ellipsis*, and the speaker transitions in the silence within the long dash to a fearful *dubitatio*.

A new episode of loss of self within the speaker begins:

I tremble at myself, / And in myself am lost!

The speaker now turns inward, trembling at his own divided nature. The tone is uncertain and fearful, and the delivery must reflect this through tempo irregularities and trembling vocal quality. In my body, I let Austin’s prescribed attitudes become slightly less stable here—allowing small, involuntary-looking tremors in the hands and a barely perceptible sway in the stance—so that the gestures seem to participate in the speaker’s loss of inner balance. A gesture of striking the forehead on “Thought” marks cognitive despair, followed by vacant eyes that express wandering reflection. The moment swells via *gradatio* to “how Reason reels!”—a climactic *exclamatio* of confusion and inner disarray.

The final passage functions as an epiphonema: a closing flourish that encapsulates the preceding themes with pathos-laden force:

O what a Miracle to Man is Man, / Triumphantly distress’d! what Joy, what Dread!

The orator now reasserts confidence and rhythm, compared to the vexation in the *dubitatio* of the previous section, delivering stark contrasts via the rhetorical *antitheses*—“Joy” versus “Dread,” “transport” vs. “alarm”—with bold gestures that reflect their opposing emotional colours. I let the prescribed expansive motions for “Joy” become quicker and more forward-driving, then pull them sharply back and inwards on “Dread,” so that the same codified vocabulary shows opposite kinetic

signatures. The tempo shifts are more marked: exuberant and forward on “Joy,” then suddenly recoiling on “Dread.”

The culminating lines—“An Angel’s Arm can’t snatch me from the Grave; / Legions of Angels can’t confine me there.”—employ *hypotyposis*. The orator pantomimes both the grave itself on the ground by gesturing downwards towards it. The angelic snatching is shown by an energetic, springing gesture of the right hand, ascending and snapping upwards at the wrist. In my performance, I emphasize the “springing” quality of this last gesture, letting the hand rebound lightly at the top of its trajectory, so that the motion feels genuinely buoyant. The final lines, though, require throwing both arms upwards, raising the hands to an ecstatic height, expressing the speaker’s triumph over death through the immortal soul. Here I allow myself to ride the full amplitude of Austin’s notation, letting the lift of the arms swell through my chest and breath, so that the gesture does not just signify triumph but induces a brief, physical sensation of exaltation: the eyes are wide, the mouth open, gazing upwards. This ecstatic gesture closes the performance with a sublime rapture that verges on transcendence and frenzy.

10.5 Artistic Reflection

My journey with Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* began in earnest several years ago in 2021, when I undertook a long period of study and training in rhetorical delivery and historical acting. I was fortunate to work under the guidance of Jed Wentz, even online during the Covid-19 pandemic, and other members of the Dutch Historical Acting Collective (DHAC) in Leiden, whose mentorship and example shaped my understanding of gesture, elocution, and the expressive body. The DHAC Collective is a group of performers, scholars, and pedagogues, usually based in the Netherlands dedicated to reviving historical practices of acting, gesture, and rhetorical delivery, particularly as they were understood in the seventeenth to early twentieth centuries. Rooted in research on treatises by authors such as Gilbert Austin, James Burgh, and Aaron Hill, among many others, the collective explores the integration of codified gesture, vocal inflection, and imaginative embodiment in both spoken and musical performance. The collective combines historical research with practical experimentation, offering workshops, performances, and training that bring the expressive techniques of historical acting traditions to life.

During this time, I immersed myself in Austin’s system—not just theoretically, but physically. I devoted myself to memorizing the texts, internalizing the gestures, and calibrating the voice and body to move together in concert, not as arbitrary embellishments or frivolous decorations, but as expressive vehicles of meaning and sentiment. As shown through my interpretations above, the repertoire I studied and prepared included the two central texts that became touchstones in my development: Gray’s *Elegy* and Young’s *Night Thoughts*. These pieces, rich in pathos and philosophical gravity, offered fertile ground for exploring the expressive scope of Austin’s gestural notation. I presented both works within the DHAC’s collaborative sessions, using Austin’s prescribed system to guide my performance

decisions. The technical hurdles were considerable — learning to coordinate the precise timing of gestures, matching vocal inflection to physical movement, and ensuring fidelity to the marked notation required intense concentration and repeated practice. But once these mechanical aspects became more automatic, new and subtler challenges emerged. Crucially, the repeated work also began to stock my memory with a repertory of affective “figures”: not just remembered lines of poetry, but remembered attitudes, emotional trajectories, and inner sensations that could later be reactivated when phrasing a musical work.

The first was a psychological one: overcoming embarrassment. In modern society, we are not accustomed to using our bodies and voices in such elevated and stylized ways. Rhetorical performance, especially of the sort Austin prescribes, risks seeming histrionic to contemporary sensibilities. At first, I felt the weight of self-consciousness acutely. It took considerable effort to push myself past this internal resistance—to truly dare, to embody the grand passions, to stretch the voice into its full expressive range, and to commit the body to expansive, codified gesture. Jed Wentz was instrumental here: his coaching—and even more, his example—encouraged me to be bold. His performances revealed how this style could be not only effective but profoundly moving when approached with sincerity and conviction. Through his mentorship, I began to find freedom on the other side of inhibition. And though the work of daring is never complete, I made significant inroads.

Another obstacle was physical. I realized that I often over-exerted myself in performance: not to the point of physical pain or distress, but rather produced expressions that were deemed by observers in DHAC to be extraneous, over-wrought, and affectations. In trying to project intensity, I overloaded the gestures with too much force. The result was not power but excess—gestures became clumsy, overshooting, overly-telegraphed, even inelegant. Moreover, the excess muscular tension led to constriction of the resonance of the voice, and no amount of force would help me use my declamatory voice to its full extent. Until I learned to be aware of my bodily tensions and relax them, I was blocked. This tendency was addressed through a parallel line of study: the Alexander Technique. Under the tutelage of Anne Smith, also a member of DHAC, I began to develop a more refined awareness of movement. Her approach helped me cultivate physical economy and poise, aligning movement with breath and thought rather than sheer effort. The transformation was palpable. My colleagues in DHAC commented that the gestures gained in nobility and grace, reminding them more of the still, eloquent power of figures in eighteenth-century history paintings. This shift changed not only the aesthetic but the expressive quality of my delivery: what had been straining became serene; what had been laboured became elevated.

But perhaps the deepest challenge was artistic: acting itself, and truly striving for the ideal of the sentimental acting theorists. In *Night Thoughts* especially, I struggled to animate the words from within. The text’s weighty theological and existential themes—death, judgment, immortality—felt

distant at first. In response, I leaned heavily on an “outside-in” approach: I imitated the vocal colours of the passions, drawing from sources like Walker and Burgh, and attempted to construct a semblance of sublime despair through theatrical noise. But this was a misapplication of these sources and diverges from their intended pedagogical function. Ultimately, this approach rang hollow. My colleagues noticed the artifice. The gestures and vocalisations, though technically correct, felt disconnected—an echo of expression rather than expression itself—and perhaps the insincere, “presentational” acting that many scholars often assume eighteenth-century acting to be. Their critique stung, but it was warranted: the performance was affected because I had not yet made the sentiments my own.

The turning point came when I began to act “inside-out,” following the advice of Austin, Aaron Hill, and other rhetorical theorists who insist that true expression must begin in the imagination. I trained myself not just to execute but to believe. By forming vivid mental images and allowing them to affect me inwardly, I began to feel the sentiments as real. The gestures and vocal inflections that followed were no longer performative constructs but genuine reactions: and while they were shaped by the models of Walker and Burgh, the effect was different because they came from within. I started to make a personal connection with the lines of *Night Thoughts*—not merely interpreting Young’s reflections on death, or even Austin’s, but confronting my own. In keeping with the sentimentalist theories of interpretation put forward in Chapter 6, I did not seek merely to reproduce Young’s sentiments as though they were fixed within the text. Although I spoke his words, I aimed to make them imaginatively my own, reanimating them through my own experience and sensibility. The feelings that emerged in performance were therefore not necessarily Young’s sentiments in any recoverable or definitive sense, but my own sentimental apprehension of the text based on the emotions, images, and bodily responses it awakened in me in the moment of delivery. This altered the character of the performance. What had previously been presentational became intimate and lived, relying not simply on the mechanical execution of the words or gestural notation, but on a real-time interaction between the text, my imagination, my trained reflex of corporeal eloquence, and the responses unfolding within my mind and body. My colleagues remarked upon the change, sensing something more noble and moving—something that approached the sublime not merely through grandeur, but through the apparent reality and sincerity of the experience.

In the end, I came to see this transformation as a kind of “Pygmalionism”—that concept in eighteenth-century aesthetics of the Bolevian Sublime where the boundary between art and nature blurs, and imagination breathes life into art. In rhetorical acting, one must do the same: animate text and dead gestures with living sentiment. Likewise, the same approach was applied to music. The feeling musician faces a parallel task: notes on a page are not music until they are enlivened through feeling—through the performer’s imaginative apprehension of character, sentiment, and affect. Just as the orator must inwardly conceive the sentiment before shaping voice and gesture, the feeling musician must first awaken the passion within, allowing it to inform phrasing, articulation, tempo, and dynamic nuance. In

both cases, true expression arises not from imitation or technical polish alone, but from the sincere internalization of the affective idea—translating the invisible workings of thought and sentiment into audible and visible form. When this succeeds, even for a fleeting moment, the sublime ceases to be an abstraction—it becomes a lived, immediate experience, shared between performer and audience, real in its own time. That, I believe, is the power of this classical rhetorical tradition.

10.6 Experiments and Documentation at the *Schlosstheater* in Ludwigsburg

This case study was capped off with several experiments which took place during August 2025 at the *Schlosstheater* Ludwigsburg, an original theatre built during 1758–59, renovated in 1812, and eventually restored in 1998. It contains an extensive collection of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century stage sets and scenery, as well as original stage architecture, machinery, and stage effects, largely preserved in original form.²⁶ The auditorium presents a horseshoe plan with four levels of boxes and galleries. The stage is largely flat (not raked), quite deep, and equipped with six ranks of wing flats and a painted backdrop that create the period’s characteristic forced perspective. A small forestage projects roughly two meters beyond the proscenium, and multiple trapdoors are present. Although quick scenery changes are possible here with the mechanized stage machinery, no technicians were available on the day of the experiments, so a replica of a forest set remained in place throughout.



Figure 12. The interior of the Ludwigsburg Schlosstheater, showing the forest set.

²⁶ See Thomas Knödler, “Zur Wiedereröffnung des Schloßtheaters“, *Schlosstheater Ludwigsburg: Zum Abschluss der Restaurierung*, 1998 (Stuttgart: Finanzministerium Baden-Württemberg, 1998), p. 7.



Figure 13. The interior of the Ludwigsburg Schlosstheater, showing stage lighting on the wing-flats, footlights, and chandelier.

In these respects, this Schlosstheater functions not only as a rare historical monument but as a laboratory for corporeal eloquence: a relic of theatrical past that allows the coupling of inner feeling and outward

sign to be explored under conditions akin to those of 1740–1830. Following from Meike Wagner’s call for a “praxeology of theatre historiography,” these experiments sought embodied, practice-based insights that the archive alone cannot yield. Wagner characterizes praxeology as an “interplay of theory and practice that allows us to gain practical knowledge of theatre history”²⁷ and argues that “critical and experimental restaging [...] gives us an experience, perhaps not of real historical theatre practices, but at least of historically informed theatre practices.”²⁸ Building on this rationale, I aimed to access the embodied knowledge surfaced in my earlier case studies by trying them out in a historic theatre designed for such practices. Dr. Petra Pechaček, who is Head of Development, Collections, Visitor Services at the Staatliche Schlösser und Gärten Baden-Württemberg, kindly made this historic theatre available for this experiment. Specifically, I performed the two aforementioned excerpts from Gilbert Austin’s *Chironomia* (Gray’s *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* and Young’s *Night Thoughts*) and produced video documentation to support analysis.

10.6.1 Eighteenth-century Theatre and Rhetorical Agency

As various scholars have observed, eighteenth-century theatre was built less around a single, directorial “eye” than around a constantly evolving network of conventions, crafts, and personalities—one that could feel chaotic, but also intensely flexible. As Tiffany Stern stresses for theatre from the sixteenth through early nineteenth centuries, there was no modern “director” or “producer” to impose an overarching concept; instead, authority was dispersed across actors, stage officers, and—crucially—the performers themselves.²⁹ In her view, what results is a rehearsal-and-performance culture that can look alarmingly loose from a contemporary *Regietheater* standpoint, but that was also thrilling and dynamic—constantly in motion, responsive to the moment, and perpetually renewed rather than fixed into routine.

Such volatility was part of the immediacy of theatre itself in the period, which relied on individual preparation and agency. As Stern notes, “calling group rehearsals and having them were different matters,” and she quotes a contemporary complaint that the theatre might be reserved for rehearsals, yet no one would reliably show up.³⁰ Stern’s point here proposes an artistic paradigm that is not simply about a “lack of discipline,” but rather, a different distribution of agency. In such a system, the performer’s preparedness could not depend on a long rehearsal period or on being “blocked” into fixed movement; it depended on personal craft, shared conventions, and most importantly, *kairos*. Despite appearances, this apparent chaos had an internal logic: flexibility was enabled by convention. In Wagner’s account of historic theatre sites (drawing on a panel discussion with practitioners), eighteenth-century performance is described as “dominated by rules.” But much like the

²⁷ Meike Wagner, “On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁹ Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 2–3.

³⁰ Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan*, pp. 249–50.

framework proposed in this study, Wagner proposes that these rules were not designed to suppress imagination; instead, they were a pragmatic regulation, or a type of rhetorical commonplace. The more thoroughly an actor knows the conventions, the more he/she can flexibly “play with them,” even bending or breaking them for effect.³¹ Those shared “rules” or commonplaces—alongside tools like the prompter’s box—made rapid mounting of repertory feasible and allowed performers and designers to adapt quickly to changing contexts.³² Hence, this system did not substitute directorial control with anarchy; it substituted it with a craft culture in which individual agency operated within a collectively intelligible framework: one that aligns closely with the rhetorical performer’s framework elaborated by this study.

This is where the performer’s interpretive latitude becomes most relevant. Jacqueline Mulhallen (summarizing Georgian practice) calls the period “a century of great and individual acting” and explicitly links that individuality to the absence of a director: the prompter might supervise what few rehearsals existed, but the actor remained responsible for inventing the role’s expressive particulars—voice, timing, gesture, and stage “business.”³³ The aesthetic ideal underwriting this latitude is, in essence, an inside-out sentimental model of *actio*. Mulhallen cites a contemporary insistence that the face “cannot express” a passion “unless” it is “first felt.”³⁴ That coupling between inner movement and outward sign is exactly the linchpin here: rhetorical delivery (*actio*) is not a decorative layer applied to meaning, but the visible and audible evidence of sentimental thoughts and ideas.

Framed against that backdrop, my experiments in the *Schlosstheater* in Ludwigsburg sought to be a deliberate reclamation of rhetorical agency, inspired by a historical site. The aim is to step into the performer’s eighteenth-century “job description”—closer to the orator than to the modern executor of an imposed concept, whether that be by a director, or a text-literalist score reading—and to use historically attested principles (for example, corporeal eloquence, the “sentimental” through-line from *Chironomia*, and its broader culture of embodied eloquence) as enablers of personal invention. Where modern practices disrupt the coupling between inner feeling and outward sign, they risk substituting external features for natural expression. My appeal to historic theatrical flexibility is thus an argument for acting (and music-making) with a command of the aesthetics of sensibility: starting with inner feeling, clothing it in forms supplied by imagination and moderated by a cultivated judgement and taste.

³¹ Meike Wagner, “Performing in Historic Theatre Sites: Frames, Potentials, Challenges”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, p. 260.

³² Ibid.

³³ Jacqueline Mulhallen, *The Theatre of Shelley* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2010), p. 40.

³⁴ Mulhallen, *The Theatre of Shelley*, p. 42.

10.6.2 Establishing Physical Stage Principles

The session began with preliminary tests designed to let the building “instruct” the performance— analogous to how playing on a historical pianoforte discloses technique and articulation appropriate to its period. I first mapped optimal acting locations in relation to illumination, acoustics, and perspective, based on principles described in historical treatises.

For lighting, I used the historical positions—footlights, back-of-wing lights, the central chandelier, and candle fixtures in the auditorium—now electrified. Open flames are prohibited in monument sites, yet the low illumination approximated candlelit conditions sufficiently to shape performance and reception. Filming in these conditions was challenging, but the ambience was instructive for reconstructing historical visuality. The electrified footlights, replacing historical oil lamps with reflectors, cast a limited band of light, which diffused quickly with distance. Through repeated entrances and short, spoken trials, I determined an optimal speaking location roughly two meters deep (downstage), centred under the proscenium arch. I found that a step too far up- or downstage out of this strip would leave my face in shadow, and the emotions would no longer be legible. This helped orient my stage entrances, as I sought to arrive at this point after entering from the wings. This became my principal speaking position.



Figure 14. Footlights in the Ludwigsburg Schlosstheater.

Next, I tested the acoustics at varying locations, orientations, and intensities. Contrary to initial expectations, the room carries speech surprisingly well. Standing at the proscenium around my principal speaking position—thus on the “hinge” between stage and auditorium—I could turn three-quarters or even upstage without significant loss of intelligibility in the galleries; carefully articulated whispers were understandable at distance. While not generalizable to all eighteenth-century theatres, Ludwigsburg’s design clearly supports spoken delivery with minimal force, aligning with Wagner’s

observation that a historic stage “revealed its potential both as a musical and affective instrument.”³⁵ The space channels the various passions from orator to audience effectively, aiding in the transmission of *pathos* through sympathy. From my perspective, this also trained a kind of “vocal taste”: I had to learn how little force was needed for clarity and affect, a discipline closely parallel to managing sound proportion on historical keyboard instruments.

Lastly, I made some observations about the kinetics of the space. The wooden stage deck was remarkably smooth; sliding transitions into Austin’s prescribed contrapposto “attitudes” proved comfortable and repeatable. Adopting rules attested in period sources like Johannes Jelgerhuis’s *Theoretische lessen over de gesticulatie en mimiek* (1827), like avoiding strict profile to the house, I rehearsed curved entrance paths from the wings to the central speaking locus, maintaining visibility of the visage and hands *en route* to the principal speaking position.

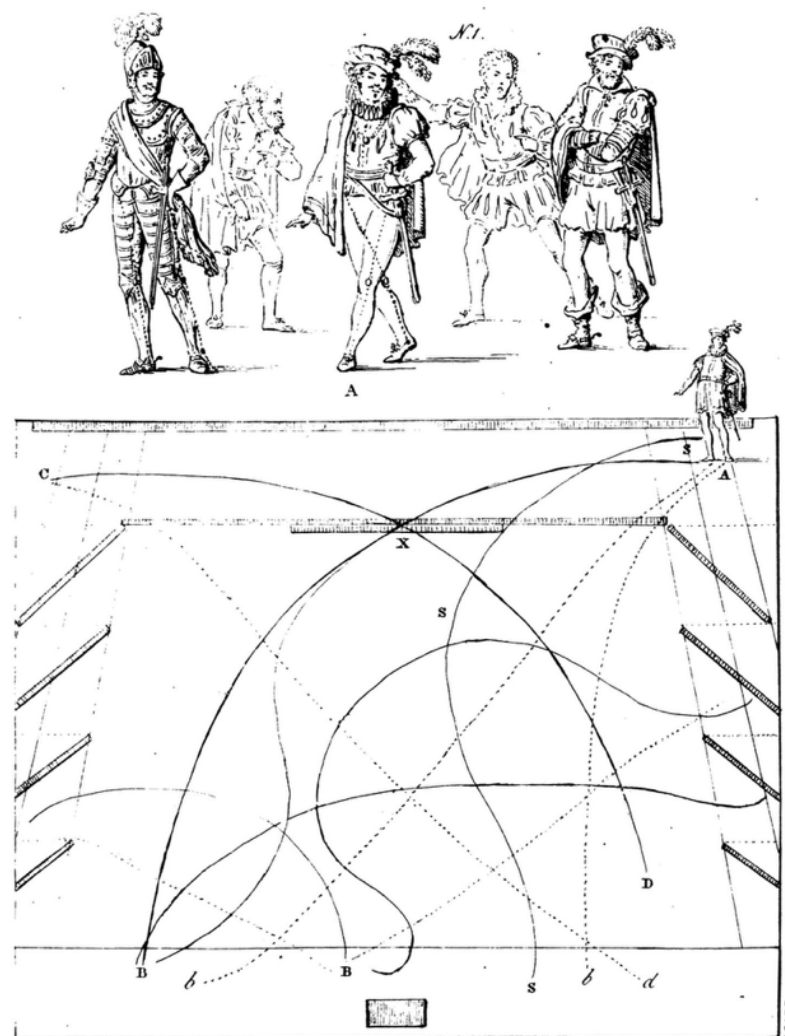


Figure 15. Johannes Jelgerhuis, *Rienkzoon's Theoretische Lessen over de Gesticulatie en Mimiek* (Amsterdam: 1827), plate 3: [entrances, exits].

³⁵ Wagner, “On a Praxeology of Theatre Historiography”, *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, p. 39.

10.6.3 Costume

For the experiments, I wore a man's suit ca. 1770. This included leather buckle shoes, blue stockings, green knee breeches, cotton shirt, silk waistcoat, silk *cravat*, and a bright red coat (*habit à l'anglaise*). Most of these items were largely hand-made with historically informed processes at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (CWF) and James Townsends & Sons. My hair was powdered and styled by Sonja Frieese using pomatum (also from CWF) and powder recreated from eighteenth-century recipes, and a tricorne was used for Gray's *Elegy* to underscore the outdoor setting. The ensemble affected carriage, balance, and manual comportment in ways directly relevant to Austin's system: buckle shoes with leather soles facilitated controlled slides and the balance of contrapposto attitudes; the coat's skirts disciplined torso rotation; the stockings and knee breeches made the *contrapposto* pose more visually striking; and the cuffs of the coat helped exemplify the hand gestures.



Figure 16. Anders Muskens (the author), in costume, at Schloss Ludwigsburg.

These choices were not meant to be merely decorative additions; they altered kinaesthetic affordances and thereby the feasibility and clarity of gesture. In this respect, my observations correspond with scholar Petra Dotlačilová's argument that costume and light are active agents in performance, not inert ornament: cut, fabrication, and reflectivity co-produce visibility, legibility, and movement quality under eighteenth-century illumination.³⁶ Even without sequins or theatrical "*tonnelets*," my silk waistcoat's sheen, as well as various metal buttons on the breeches, shoe buckles, and linen cuffs all acted as small reflectors in the low, frontal beam of footlights. I believe these would sharpen the audience's perception of hand articulations, wrist turns, and the measured advance–retreat that Austin prescribes. Conversely, darker coat cloth muted excessive motion and discouraged ungainly torsion, nudging execution toward economy and dignity. My choice to wear darker coloured breeches to contrast the brighter torso and skin also helped highlight the movements of the hands and face against the dark forest set, further drawing the audience's attention to the "affective" instruments of the orator. The costume thus did more than complete an eighteenth-century "look": it disciplined the body into a repertoire of poised, economical movements and made certain attitudes feel more natural than others—exactly the sort of habituated, cultivated corporeal eloquence that underpins later musical expression as well. Dotlačilová's experimental findings on candlelit stages—that reflective textiles heighten figure readability across depth, that principal speakers benefit from the enhanced lighting of the proscenium band, and that garment construction conditions the range and precision of gesture—help explain why historically cut breeches, shoes, and coats so effectively "train" the body toward period-appropriate delivery in situ.

10.6.4 Sequenced Trials

With these parameters set, I performed multiple takes of the *Chironomia* excerpts, including motivated entrances and exits keyed to the passions of each text.

³⁶ See Petra Dotlačilová, "Materiality in Action: Costume and Light on the Eighteenth-Century Stage", *Performing the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 139–164.



Figure 17. The author on stage at the Ludwigsburg Schlosstheater.

The theatre's architectural geometry and features proved unexpectedly generative for descriptive figures (*hypotyposis*). In small rooms or modern "black-box" spaces, it can be difficult to "place" imagined objects convincingly, much like film actors struggling to act against a green screen where spaces are composited in during post-production. Here, the auditorium's horseshoe and layered ornamentation supplied vivid anchor points: oblique indications could be directed from one balcony to the opposite; the chandelier served as a luminous "moon" or "heavens"; the proscenium columns crowned by beautiful Corinthian capitals suggested the "ivy-mantl'd tow'r" of Gray's *Elegy*. These

architectural cues acted as a scaffold for the eye, reducing cognitive load in scene painting and promoting more precise deictic gestures. As I repeated the excerpts, these fixed points in space became tightly linked to inner images and sentiments, so that the outward pointing gesture, the imagined object, and the felt passion increasingly formed a single, coupled unit in memory.

The room supported fine gradations of tone, rhythm, and timbre associated with the passions. Consonantal energy carried without harshness; dynamic pivots remained intelligible even at low light levels. I felt in my early takes that I relied on traces of “outside-in” delivery — technically correct shapes without full sentimental ignition — as I began with a bit of trepidation and a more languid imagination. But as familiarity with the space grew, my sentimental investment deepened, and delivery warmed. Some casual observers from the palace staff remarked on the perceptible transformation. Self-critically, I noted occasional over-exertion—lapsing into the detested “sawing of the air” Hamlet warns against—yet later passes exhibited greater economy and dignity. In other words, repeated work in the space gradually refined my “taste” in gesture: I began to feel which movements were proportionate to the sentiment and which broke the nobility of the style, a discernment that parallels the cultivation of taste in timing, rubato, and dynamic inflection at the keyboard.

After completing several performances of the two excerpts, I added one last experiment on *Night Thoughts*: I relaxed strict adherence to Austin’s notation. But as per the theories of taste and habit forming described in Chapter 5.4, I did not aim for this phase of the experiment to become a deviation into arbitrary nonsense, or a rhapsodic lapse into caprice. Because I had internalized the gestural vocabulary through training (Austin, Walker, and related sources via the Dutch Historical Acting Collective), the notated figures provided by Austin functioned as a latent template rather than a prescriptive script — they lived in my mind, but I was not beholden to following them exactly. I sought out new, more personal expressive solutions, in some sense, channeling my voice through inherited technique and stylistic models. Austin explicitly frames his own exercises as only one solution among “innumerable” possibilities, thereby inviting students to test alternatives and develop gestures of their own.³⁷ In keeping with eighteenth-century sentimental aesthetics, I treated inner feeling as something that must arise in real time—co-present with outward features like utterance and action—so that expression is not a pre-fabricated pose but a response calibrated to the contingencies of the moment. In this mode, the actor’s (or “feeling musician’s”) delivery becomes a regulated improvisation: the next step up from a sympathetic interpretation. Here, gaze, gesture, attitude, timing, and intensity answer to immediate sentimental stimuli—the line to be spoken next, the acoustic return from the room, the sightlines afforded by the house, my own sensation of my action in my own body, and the evolving inner state. The result is less a rejection of rule than its animation by *kairos*. This is the idealized approach that sentimental actors and musicians of the period employed.

³⁷ Austin, *Chironomia*, p. 368.

Practically, this approach liberated more footwork and a broader use of depth, exploiting the full scale of the stage while preserving period decorum (nobility; frontality; measured advance and retreat; voice, hands, and face as principal signifiers). The shift can be likened to agogics and rubato in performance: durations and emphases breathe with the feeling, without abandoning the underlying metre of Austin's system. *Hypotyposis* benefited in particular. Because the referential objects were "placed" anew each time, their deictic utterance acquired a living specificity rather than a merely repeatable process. Eighteenth-century theorists of sensibility insist that genuine affect must be *felt* in real time if it is to be convincing; correspondingly, here the inner movement prompted the gesture, and the gesture, enacted under historical constraints of light and space, in turn intensified the feeling—Hill's "Mazy Round." A large historic theatre, with its expanded kinetic and acoustic affordances, can amplify effect when the performer treats notation as a generative schema and allows sentiment—emerging in performance—to govern the fine grain of delivery without violating style.

10.6.5 Reflections on Method

These trials confirm the utility of praxeology in theatre historiography. Engaging the historic stage as an instrument disclosed relationships among light, sightlines, acoustics, and gesture that are difficult to infer from documents alone. It adds a further practical element that further develops the historically informed performance practice of acting. The experiment's constraints—electrified rather than candle flames, a single set, and the absence of full crew—should be acknowledged; nevertheless, the experiments delivered precisely the kind of historically informed experience Wagner describes: they made palpable how the stage's material configuration co-produces delivery, audience address, and affective efficacy. Finally, the *Schlosstheater's* exceptional state of preservation renders it a uniquely fertile site for such inquiry. It continues to mediate between past practice and present investigation, enabling experimentally grounded claims about acting technique in the period ca. 1740–1830.

A video recording of these performances is available in the Supplement of this study.

II. Case Study 3: Forkel's Analysis of C.P.E. Bach's Sonata in f minor, Wq. 57/6

In an article for the *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland 1784* (1783), Johann Nikolaus Forkel provides his readers with a commentary on sonata, analyzing Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's celebrated Sonata in f minor Wq. 57/6 (1763) from the third collection of works *für Kenner und Liebhaber* (published 1781). Forkel writes in epistolary form, addressing an anonymous patron, who is presumably a *Liebhaber*, familiar with poetry, and certainly an enthusiast for music, but in need of further understanding to appreciate Bach's sonata. Forkel sees the music of C.P.E. Bach to be an "acquired taste:" the appreciation of which is unlocked when a *Liebhaber* (who already abounds in sensibility) has cultivated their judgement and taste, becoming more of a *Kenner*. Forkel steps up to the challenge, giving a brief overview of sentimentalism, the connection between music and poetry, musical grammar, and rhetorical *dispositio*. In doing so, he implicitly addresses the problem that runs through this study: how inner feeling is coupled to outward sign, and how taste must be formed so that this coupling becomes ordered, communicable, and durable rather than capricious, arbitrary, or disconnected. This section will focus on what Forkel says about rhetorical structure and its connection to the sentimental narrative and is accompanied by an audio performance of the work.

Sonata III in F Minor

Wq 57/6

Allegro assai

5

9

13

17

21

p

ff

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Musical Example 46. C.P.E. Bach, Sonata III in F Minor, Wq 57/6. PHI I/4.1, pp. 122–129.

24

28

32

35

39

43

f

pp

1 2



68

72

76

80

84

88

23 *p* *f* *p* *f*

26 *f* *pp* *f*

29 *f* *pp* *f*

32 *p* *pp* *p* *più f* *ff* *p*

35 *f* *ff* *p* *pp*

39 *f* *p* *pp*

42 *f* *p* *f* *pp*

Andantino grazioso
ten.

6

11

16

22

27

33

ff

p

pp

f

pp

f

ten.

3

1

2

37 *ten.*

42

47

52

57 *pp*

62

67

1 2

Forkel begins his article with a brief overview of the concepts presented in Chapter 7, specifically addressing the genre of sonata. Forkel notes that “true” expression of art requires order and proper linkages in a stepwise progression of feeling, and without these, works become powerless, confused, or too fantastical.¹ In his view, the sentiments must follow one another with a kind of emotional syntax: each affective state issues naturally from the last. His opinion is reinforced by quoting Lessing, noting that the musician who “wants to speak to our hearts, and wants to kindle likeable emotions in it, must consider coherence just as much as he who strives to entertain and lecture our minds,” because “without coherence, or “the most intimate connection of all parts, the best music is a vain pile of sand, incapable of leaving a lasting impression; solely coherence turns it into solid marble on which the artist’s hand can perpetuate itself.”² Forkel states that a sonata, for him, is the musical expression of a person stirred by sentiment. This person either seeks to maintain a pleasant sentiment at a high level, or to gradually soften a troubling feeling into one of greater ease.

A good sonata, according to Forkel, firstly requires enthusiasm (*Begeisterung*) in the expression of feelings, and secondly, structure (*Anordnung*), such that the feelings progress purposefully and naturally.³ The requirement of “enthusiasm” points directly to the role of active imagination and emotional immediacy. However, as Gerard described in Chapter 5, Forkel immediately qualifies this with the second requirement: “structure.” This is where judgment and taste become indispensable. Structure, in this sense, is a progression in which each sentiment emerges from the last. It ensures that even distant sentiments, when introduced, feel purposeful. In other words, enthusiasm supplies the fervent inner motion, while structure fashions it into a rhetorical sequence; taste lies in the cultivated coupling of both, so that spontaneous feeling and outward form mutually regulate one another.

Forkel connects the *pathos* of music to moral sentiments and regulation. He presents several options for the “moral” journey of a three-movement sonata, which should in some measure quell the more violent passions into more pleasant, or moral, ones. The composer has three methods to achieve this sentimental narrative throughout the movements.⁴ The first method involves establishing a pleasant

¹ Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, pp. 25–26.

² Wer mit unserm Herzen sprechen, und sympathetische Regungen in ihm erwecken will, muß ebensowohl Zusammenhang beobachten, als wer unsern Verstand zu unterhalten und zu belehren denkt. Ohne Zusammenhang, ohne die innigste Verbindung aller und jeder Theile, ist die beste Musik ein eitler Sandhaufen, der keines dauerhaften Eindrucks fähig ist; nur der Zusammenhang macht sie zu einen festen Marmor, an dem sich die Hand des Künstlers verewigen kann. Ibid., p. 26.

³ Begeisterung, oder höchstlebhaften Ausdruck gewisser Gefühle; zweytens: Anordnung, oder zweckmäßige und natürliche Fortschreitung dieser Gefühle, in ähnliche und verwandte, oder auch in entferntere. Ibid., p. 29.

⁴ Die erste Ordnung ist die, wo eine angenehme Hauptempfindung herrscht, und durch alle mögliche passende und damit verwandte angenehme Nebenempfindungen durch ein ganzes Stück hindurch unterhalten wird

Die zwote, wo eine unangenehme Hauptempfindung unterdrückt, besänftigt, und nach und nach in eine angenehme verwandelt wird.

Die dritte, wenn eine angenehme Hauptempfindung nicht unterhalten und fortgeführt, sondern durch die Interposition erst schwache, sodann stärkerer unangenehmer Gefühle vertilgt, und dadurch endlich ganz in eine unangenehme Empfindung verwandelt wird. [...] Wenn also die musikalischen Ausdrücke gewisser Gefühle in einer Sonate nach der ersten angegebenen

main sentiment that is maintained throughout the piece by reinforcing it with related, equally pleasant auxiliary emotions. Here, the first movement should firmly establish and strengthen the pleasant main feeling with similar supporting emotions, the second movement should introduce some doubt or hesitation, and the third movement should allow the main feeling to return powerfully and be fully reaffirmed. The second method starts with an unpleasant main emotion that is gradually subdued and transformed into a pleasant one over time. Here, the first movement should thoroughly present the unpleasant main emotion, the second should show reflection or reconsideration, and the third should resolve the tension by calming and soothing the feeling. The third method takes an initial pleasant feeling and allows it to be disrupted and eventually overtaken by increasingly strong unpleasant emotions, so that it ultimately turns into something unpleasant. A sonata like Beethoven's *Appassionata* would take the third method: but Forkel, constantly concerned about moral regulation in music, does not prefer this approach. As Forkel will next relate, Bach's Sonata Wq. 57/6 has taken the second approach: where an unpleasant main feeling is suppressed, gradually calmed and turned into a pleasant feeling. The whole work thus enacts a moral "trajectory," in which the listener's inner state is sympathetically led by the performer, step by step, from turmoil to a more composed and wholesome sentiment. Forkel then gives an overview of the sentimental narrative expressed throughout Bach's sonata:

[...] the first *Allegro* contains the expression of a certain dissatisfaction – the *Andante* contains consideration and reflection – and the last *Andantino grazioso* contains the resulting, I am almost tempted to say somewhat melancholic, calming. [...] Your instinct will soon tell You that the last movement, because of its melancholically comforting, calming and almost balsamic expression, is the best that one can wish for in a piece of this character. Furthermore, it is my opinion that this movement constitutes the main merit of the whole sonata. Not that the two previous movements were not similarly beautiful in their intention and purpose – but because its melancholically soothing and calming expression matches the first fundamental rule of musical aesthetics the most: the depiction and arousal of pleasant and wholesome feelings. If I see someone act in defiance and anger, they make me feel uneasy, afraid, I sense roughness and a lack of reason etc., nothing but hateable traits; would the depiction of such feelings in pieces of art give us pleasure? No, feeling enjoyment requires that reason returns to the mind of the defiant and angry person once they

Ordnung auf einander folgen sollen, so wird das Verfahren am besten seyn, welches die Schilderungen so ordnet, daß im ersten Satze die angenehme Hauptempfindung erregt, durch ähnliche Nebengefühle unterstützt und befestigt — im zweyten gleichsam durch Einwürfe gewissermassen wankend und zweifelhaft gemachtaber im dritten dennoch aufs neue hervorbreche, und bestätigt und bekräftigt werde.

In der zwoten Ordnung müßte der erste Satz die unangenehme Hauptempfindung auf verschiedenen Seiten schildern, — der zweyte Betrachtung und Ueberlegung — und endlich der dritte, die aus der vorhergegangenen Betrachtung entstandene Besänftigung des unangenehmen Gefühls, und Beruhigung enthalten. Das Verfahren der dritten Ordnung läßt sich von den beyden vorhergehenden sehr leicht von selbst abstrahiren. Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, pp. 34–36.

realize that composure and meekness are much more noble feelings than those that previously controlled them; it requires that calmness and remorse cause somewhat mixed feelings in them, which may just lead to a melancholically comforting feeling.⁵

While Forkel does not explicitly explain most of the musical *topoi* that give rise to these sentiments, they can be easily inferred on appraisal of the score. The first movement is stormy, suggesting “dissatisfaction,” in its defiance, anger, and roughness. It is choppy, with sharp chords in the left-hand punctuating relentlessly driving dotted rhythms which ascend roughly in bounding intervals. These give way to aggressively turbulent triplets, and frenzied runs of sixteenth notes, expressing the tumultuous internal *Sturm und Drang* experience of the unsettled soul. The key is distressed: F minor, which Schubart had called “deep depression” with “growls of misery, yearning for the grave.”⁶ It is often interrupted by extreme dissonances—the “growls of misery” presumably—such as the anguished *exclamatio*, marked fortissimo, which grows in repetition throughout bars 20–22. Here, the outward musical *topoi*—register, rhythm, dissonance, dynamic—paint the natural signs of anger and unrest; Forkel’s point is that these signs only achieve their full force when they are taken up into an ordered narrative, so that the performer’s own felt dissatisfaction can be coupled consistently to these patterns and then gradually led elsewhere in a sort of “Mazy Round” circuit.

Forkel next gives a description of the middle section after the double bar (b. 35), which is filled with the most violent, dissonant modulations:

Perhaps You did not like the section in the second part of the first *Allegro* where Bach modulates to Ab minor, then Fb major and from there, in a somewhat harsh way, back to F minor. I must admit that, taken out of its larger context, I did not like it as well. But who likes the harsh, rough and fierce utterances of an angry and defiant person? I am very much

⁵ Ew. re. werden nun bey dem ersten Anblick der Sonate sogleich gewahr werden, daß das erste *Allegro* den Ausdruck eines gewissen Unwillens — das *Andante* Betrachtung und Ueberlegung — und das letzte *Andantino* grazioso daraus entstandene, fast möchte ich sagen, etwas melancholische Beruhigung enthalte. Wenn Sie die Sonate von dieser Seite und auf diese Art betrachten, so wird Ihnen Ihr Gefühl bald sagen, daß das letzte Stück eben des melancholisch-beruhigten und fast balsamisch-tröstenden Ausdrucks wegen das vorzüglichste sey, was man sich in diesem Charakter denken und wünschen kann. Auch liegt meiner Meynung nach, hierinn der hauptsächlichste Werth der ganzen Sonate. Nicht, daß die beyden vorhergehenden Stücke ihrer Absicht und Bestimmung nach nicht ebenfalls schön wären, sondern deswegen, weil der melancholisch-tröstende und beruhigende Ausdruck der ersten Grundregel der musikalischen Ästhetik am meisten und besten entspricht, nach welcher die Schilderung und Erregung angenehmer und wohlthätiger Gefühle ihr Hauptaugenmerk seyn muß. Wenn ich einen Menschen in Unwillen und Zorn handeln sehe, so erregt er mir ein unangenehmes Gefühl, er macht mich bange, ich bemerke in seinen Handlungen Rauhmigkeit, Unbilligkeit rc. lauter hassenswürdige Eigenschaften; sollte uns nun die Schilderung solcher Gefühle in Kunstwerken Vergnügen machen können? Nein, das Vergnügen entsteht erst dann, wenn die ganze Besinnungskraft dieses unwilligen und zornigen Menschen wieder zurückkehrt, wenn er erst einsieht, daß Gelassenheit und Sanftmuth edlere und würdigere Gefühle sind, als diejenigen, von welchen er sich hat einnehmen lassen, wenn Beruhigung und Reue ein gewissermaßen gemischtes Gefühl in ihm erregen, woraus vielleicht gerade das melancholisch-tröstende zusammengesetzt ist. Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, pp. 36–37.

⁶ *F moll, tiefe Schwermuth, Leichenklage, Jammergeächz, und grabverlangende Sehnsucht*. Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, p. 378; trans. Ted Alan DuBois, p. 434.

inclined to believe that Bach, whose taste is so extraordinarily on point everywhere else, was not led by any wrong feeling here, and that the aforementioned harsh modulation is nothing but a true expression of what should and had to be expressed at this place under these circumstances.

To make up for this, You will find such poignant and gentle depictions in the *Andante* and *Andantino grazioso*, presented so variedly in many different ways, dismantled, supported, reinforced, really heart-touching near the end, that one will surely not retain much of the previously shown unpleasant feelings of defiance and anger.⁷

Here, Forkel notes the sequence of violent transitions which occurs between bars 49–65 from a-flat minor to F-flat major, then to b-flat minor, and eventually back to f minor launching into the reprise. The first modulation is the roughest, most dissonant transition, due to its abruptness. While Schubart does not give a description of A-flat minor, he describes G-flat minor as “a heart squeezed to the point of suffocation” and “difficult struggle.”⁸ But Forkel argues that this modulation, despite its dissonance and ugliness, is fitting to depict the “harsh, rough and fierce utterances of an angry and defiant person” and works in the context also because it is greatly tempered by the beautiful content in the second and third movement. Hence, within the *Sturm und Drang* aesthetic, “ugly” effects can be fitting, and even tasteful, because they correctly depict the pain and distress demanded by their context. This parallels Lessing’s *Laocoon* (1766), where he famously analyzes the antique Laocoön statue to show that even painful, “ugly” expressions are justified in art if they convey natural truth and move the viewer authentically. Through this, Lessing defends the tasteful use of intense or violent imagery when it serves the work’s emotional and moral purpose.⁹ Lessing also captures this in his comment on acting: “Acting should, it must often allow itself the wildness of a Tempesta, the audacity of a Bernini [...] but it must gradually prepare for each [gesture], and resolve each through the subsequent movements back to a general tone of decorum.”¹⁰ Lessing observes that while expression may at times be bold and dramatic,

⁷ Noch eine Bemerkung. Sie haben vielleicht diejenige Stelle im zweyten Theil des ersten *Allegro* nicht schön gefunden, wo die Modulation ins As moll, bes dur, und von da auf eine etwas harte Art wieder zurück ins moll geht. Ich muß gestehen, daß ich sie, außer ihrer Verbindung mit dem Ganzen betrachtet, eben so wenig schön gefunden habe. Aber wer findet auch wohl die harten, rauhen und heftigen Aeüßerungen eines zornigen und unwilligen Menschen schön? Ich bin sehr geneigt zu glauben, daß Bach, dessen Gefühl sonst überall so außerordentlich richtig ist, auch hier von keinem unrichtigen Gefühl geleitet sey, und daß unter solchen Umständen die erwähnte harte Modulation nichts anders ist, als ein getreuer Ausdruck dessen, was hier ausgedrückt werden sollte und mußte. In dem *Andante* und *Andantino grazioso* werden Sie zur Entschädigung so rührende und sanfte Schilderungen finden, auf alle mögliche Weise so vielseitig und mannichfaltig vorgestellt, zergliedert, unterstützt, bekräftigt, und am Ende so herzeindringend, daß man gewiß nicht leicht etwas von dem vorher geschilderten unangenehmen Gefühl des Unwillens übrig behalten wird. Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland: auf das Jahr 1784*, p. 38.

⁸ *Gis moll, Griesgram, gepresstes Herz bis zum Ersticken; Jammerklage*, die im Doppelkreuz hinseufzt; *schwerer Kampf*, mit einem Wort, alles was mühsam durchringt, ist dieses Tons Farbe. Schubart, *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst*, p. 379; trans. Ted Alan Du Bois, p. 435.

⁹ For further reading, see Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laokoon: oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie. Mit beylaeufigen Erlaeuterungen verschiedener Punkte der alten Kunstgeschichte* (Berlin: 1768), §16–18.

¹⁰ On this, see Lessing, *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, Essay 5; 15 May 1767.

it must always proceed from a psychologically and physically credible path, rooted in taste. Forkel's defence of Bach's "harsh" modulations rests on the same principle: the wild outburst is acceptable because it is both contextually motivated and ultimately reabsorbed into a larger arc of calming, morally regulated feeling.

In contrast, the second movement, in the more pleasing key of F major, is calmer and more reflective, with a few stormy undercurrents frothing beneath the surface of the glassy lake that comprises the more restrained façade. This manifests in several desperate *exclamatio*, which occur in places like b. 27 and 37: the last of which fulfills the role of *Conquestio* for that movement. As Forkel observed, the third movement is the most spectacular, but not in display of virtuosity: rather in its settled, "pleasingly painful" melancholy. The mournful, yet pleasing melody of the *Hauptsatz* is cantabile, and pitiable. With a small aspiration, it gently, "pleads" with the listener in b. 3. The second theme, acting as a *confirmatio*, appears in A-flat major in b. 26 and in f-minor in b. 60. It is comforting, soothing, but melancholy, and further develops the main subject. The sequence which begins in b. 43 in the highest register of the keyboard is delicate, fragile, and tearful, and elicits a profound weeping sensation. These sentiments, as observed by Forkel, feel "earned" because they followed logically from the overall sentimental narrative, an accordingly "moral" one, which led from violent, anguished distress, quelled to contemplation, and finally to calmer, settled melancholy. These transitions reflect a natural progression of refined moral sentiment: a temperance of intense passion, and a civility. For the performer who has trained in corporeal eloquence, this progression can be mapped not only conceptually but somatically: the inward shift from defiance to remorse to tender calm can be coupled to corresponding changes in touch, timing, and tone, so that the "moral" curve of the sonata is literally felt in the body "on the soul" while it is traced in sound.

Forkel's analysis, while brief and not exceptionally detailed as it was addressed to a *Liebhaber*, still offers a clear rhetorical framework that remains relevant to the rhetorical performer. Moreover, Forkel's identification of emotional states across the three movements provides the basic scaffolding of a sentimental narrative, but for the performer, this must be taken further. They must produce a full "emotional scoring," identifying from the *topoi* the more granular sentimental turns within each section of the sonata. This involves mapping specific affective gestures—such as outbursts of anger, moments of hesitation, tender reflections—and understanding how they evolve or respond to one another within the structure. The task is not simply to label these affects, but to cultivate a stable coupling between particular inner feeling and particular modes of delivery (attack, articulation, timing, agogics, etc.), so that the same musical *topoi* and figures reliably call forth, and are coloured by, a particular felt movement. In addition to identifying the sentiments themselves, the rhetorical performer must also grasp the rhetorical *telos* embedded in the structure of the piece: understanding which sections serve to affirm the main emotional proposition, which offer partitions or elaborations, which introduce counterarguments or opposing affects, and how these are ultimately refuted or resolved. Without this

rhetorical sense of purpose, the expressive delivery risks becoming diffuse like Lessing's metaphor of the "grains of sand"—certainly not what Forkel would have considered ideal. Seen from the perspective of this study's earlier case studies, Forkel's sonata-reading shows how the habits acquired in declamation and gesture—where inner feeling is coupled to outward sign through cultivated taste—can be transposed into musical performance, where the "gestures" are now musical ones, and the language of sentiments becomes audible as a kind of musical painting.

A video recording of the performance of this sonata is available in the Supplement of this study.

12. Case Study 4: Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata, No. 21 Op. 53 (first movement)

Beethoven's Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53—commonly known as the *Waldstein*—stands as one of the composer's most daring and expansive works. Composed during 1803–04, it marks a clear departure from the stylistic models of Haydn and Mozart, announcing instead Beethoven's new heroic idiom with unflinching confidence. This case study explores my rhetorical approach to interpretation, drawing on the framework developed in this study. I adopted the methods of sympathetic interpretation, seeking to access the “residue” of Beethoven's sentimental ideas through the external features he left in his text—commonplaces, structural arrangement, and figures. In delivery, I aimed to couple these external features to my own inner feeling, bringing them to life through my corporeal eloquence and my own artistic “genius” (in Gerard's terms) at the keyboard. By examining its deployment of rhetorical commonplaces, figures, expressive punctuation, and moments of sublimity, this case study will show how I pursued recapturing the performer's role as a feeling musician. This case study will explore the interpretation and performance of the first movement: the *Allegro con brio*.

12.1 Methodological justification: from historical evidence to embodied interpretation

The performance decisions presented in this case study should be understood in relation to the broader conception of the rhetorical performer developed in Parts I and II. They do not represent attempts to reconstruct a single historically demonstrable interpretation of Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata. Rather, they constitute one possible realization of the work produced through a historically informed process of reading, imaginative transformation, embodied experimentation, and rhetorical judgement. This distinction is important because the method developed in this dissertation does not treat historical sources as instructions from which individual performance decisions can be deduced mechanically. Historical evidence establishes the conditions within which interpretation begins, but it cannot determine every aspect of the resulting performance.

Beethoven left no detailed account of precisely what the *Waldstein* Sonata was intended to express, nor instructions specifying the affective meaning of each passage or the precise manner in which that meaning should be communicated. The principal evidence available to the performer consists instead of the musical text itself and the wider historical vocabulary through which its features may be interpreted. These include many principles discussed in Parts I and II of this dissertation: musical *topoi*, structural and formal procedures,¹ rhetorical figures,² characteristic gestures of the passions,³ and other contemporary accounts of musical

¹ See Chapter 7

² See Chapter 8

³ Some of these are found in Case Study 2.

expression. These sources make it possible to identify expressive commonplaces and to construct a plausible affective or sentimental reading of the work. They do not, however, prescribe a single tempo inflection, articulation, dynamic trajectory, physical gesture, or degree of expressive intensity. To attach an individual historical citation to every such decision would therefore risk implying a degree of determinacy that the sources cannot support.⁴

I argue then that the historical features identified in the score consequently function here as starting points or prompts for performance rather than as complete prescriptions, much like the way Gerard described the way the imagination transforms commonplaces.⁵ The sentimental narrative proposed in the following analysis arises from my reading of these external signs and their relationships. Yet, as the discussion of the rhetorical performer in Chapter 4 established, signs acquire affective force best when they are reanimated through delivery. The performer seeks to call forth the sentiments embodied in the work, but the sentiments realized in performance inevitably become the performer's own, awakened in dialogue with the text. Chapter 6 describes this process as sympathetic interpretation: an interpretative encounter in which the performer responds affectively to the work and allows that response to shape its outward realization.

Sympathetic interpretation depends upon the reciprocal relation between inward sentiment and external expression examined throughout Parts I and II. Historical figures, topics, and formal structures stimulate the performer's imagination; the resulting embodied response, in turn, alters the manner in which those features are articulated. This is the kind of feedback described through the metaphor of the "mazy round" in Chapter 4:⁶ neither inner feeling nor external form possesses absolute priority. Instead, each continually acts upon the other. A musical gesture may awaken a particular sentiment, while the sentiment experienced in performing it may produce modifications of timing, emphasis, articulation, dynamics, or physical attack.⁷ The interpretative result is therefore not simply extracted from the score. It emerges through the coupling of the score's external features with the performer's cultivated sensibility.

⁴ This level of determinacy would go against the principles of rhetorical delivery developed throughout Chapter 4, especially the "Feeling Musician" of 4.3.

⁵ See p. 149.

⁶ See p. 128.

⁷ As developed in the arguments given in Chapter 4.2–3.

The means by which this transformation is regulated derive from the late-Enlightenment aesthetic psychology of genius discussed in Chapter 5. In this model, imagination is not equivalent to unrestricted fancy or arbitrary self-expression. Its inventions are disciplined by judgement and taste and directed towards an intelligible artistic purpose. Applied to performance, this means that imaginative responses must remain accountable to the structure and expressive implications of the work, to historical conventions, and to the rhetorical effect of the resulting delivery on the present audience at hand. The question is therefore not whether a performance decision can be traced to a single prescriptive statement, but whether it arises plausibly from historical evidence, forms part of a coherent affective reading, and contributes persuasively to the communication of that reading.

In this way, what happens in performance results from the musician's "acting." This also explains the prominence of acting in the earlier case studies. Eighteenth-century sources on acting often address the relationship between sentiment, imagination, bodily movement, vocal expression, and rhetorical effect more directly than contemporary musical sources. Acting therefore provides the clearest historical site for examining how an external text could be transformed into an embodied and affectively persuasive performance. The acting case studies are not intended to displace musical evidence or to suggest that music should merely imitate theatrical gesture. Rather, their methodological purpose is to reconstruct a historically specific psychology of performance that can subsequently be transferred to musical practice, and which, having trained in such principles, I applied to interpreting and performing the *Waldstein*.

Through my practical work in historical acting, I trained the voice, body, and imagination according to the principles of corporeal eloquence developed in Chapter 4 and examined throughout Part I. The purpose of this training was to cultivate a body capable of responding reflexively through a historically shaped vocabulary of expressive signs. These signs heightened and aestheticized the actor's spontaneous responses, rendering inward sentiment more beautiful, legible, and communicable to an audience. This vocabulary did not function as a fixed catalogue in which a particular emotion automatically produced a prescribed gesture. Rather, training transformed the actor's habitual modes of expression, supplying embodied resources that could arise naturally and be selected, combined, intensified, restrained, or adapted according to the dramatic situation. In the present case study, I apply the same aesthetic psychology to musical performance. The transfer is therefore not primarily one

of individual gestures from the theatre to the keyboard, but of the underlying process through which historical conventions are internalized.

For example, in Case Studies 1 and 2, acting enabled me to develop an embodied experience of righteous anger. Calling forth this sentiment drew my voice into particular registers, altered the tempo, rhythm, and force of my declamation and movement, and elicited descriptive gestures that intensified the rhetorical force of the words, further giving a sense of motion. When I subsequently turned to musical performance, the body retained a memory of how this anger had been summoned and expressed. Comparable qualities of register, pacing, attack, weight, and momentum could then enter my playing reflexively, without requiring the deliberate translation of each theatrical gesture into a precisely notated musical equivalent. This is corporeal eloquence in action: once the body has been trained in a historically shaped vocabulary of expressive signs, it can draw upon that vocabulary spontaneously in response to a new rhetorical situation.

Corporeal eloquence thus provides an important form of historical grounding even where a decision cannot be reduced to a citable surface feature. The daring, urgency, resistance, exhilaration, or physical risk that may emerge in performing the *Waldstein* cannot be established through textual evidence alone. They are also consequences of inhabiting the work's extraordinary technical and bodily demands in real time; in the moment of performing it. Such qualities must be discovered through performance: through the performer's encounter with speed, repetition, register, sonority, resistance, momentum, and physical effort.

The particular solutions adopted in this case study were selected through an iterative process. First, I identified potentially significant musical figures (see Chapter 8 for an explanation of each), topics, structural relationships (Chapter 7 provides the terminology used here), and expressive commonplaces. Second, I interpreted these features as elements within a larger sentimental and rhetorical trajectory. Third, I explored how that trajectory might be embodied through different possibilities of delivery. Finally, these possibilities were evaluated through historically cultivated judgement and taste: according to their coherence with the proposed reading, their relationship to the work's structure, and their effectiveness in communicating that reading to a listener.

The method consequently puts into practice the expanded vision of historically informed performance developed throughout the dissertation. In this model, historical authenticity is not guaranteed primarily by the accumulation of citable, external details. Such

evidence remains indispensable, since it establishes the materials, conventions, and conceptual framework from which interpretation proceeds. Yet historical information becomes artistically meaningful only when it is absorbed into the performer's imagination and transformed through embodied delivery. Authenticity may therefore emerge not despite the performer's personal and subjective engagement, but through a subjectivity cultivated by historically specific ideas about sentiment, imagination, genius, judgement, taste, and corporeal eloquence. The purpose is not to reproduce a supposedly objective and fully recoverable past, nor to conceal artistic decisions behind the authority of historical citation. It is to enable the performer to develop an individual voice through a sustained and accountable dialogue with the work and its historical world. The *Waldstein* interpretation presented below should be understood in precisely these terms: not as a reconstruction of Beethoven's own performance or expressive intention, but as a historically grounded, sympathetically imagined, and rhetorically tested realization of the musical text.

12.2 Choice of Instrument

To bring these expressive extremes to life, I chose to perform the work on my own 1806 grand piano by John Broadwood & Sons, which employs the English action, triple stringing, a 5 ½ octave compass from FF–c⁴, and 3 pedals: a true *una corda* shift pedal and a divided damper lift with a pedal each for lifting treble and bass dampers. According to both Alfons Huber⁸ and Tilman Skowroneck,⁹ this work was likely composed on Beethoven's then newly acquired 1803 grand pianoforte by Sébastien Érard. Skowroneck notes that, in “basic shape, compass and action principle,” the 1803 Érard (FF–c⁴, English action) shares many characteristics with Broadwood's grands around 1800—Érard's model merely adds two extra stop pedals.¹⁰ In other words, the core *touché* and capabilities that mattered to Beethoven were shared across both construction types. Crucially, the Érard introduced a foot damper pedal (where late-eighteenth-century Viennese instruments still used knee levers), and Beethoven immediately began writing and notating pedal effects in a new way—precisely the sort of technique that transfers naturally to an English piano from 1806.

⁸ See Alfons Huber, “Beethovens ‘Erard’-Flügel: Überlegungen zu seiner Restaurierung,” *Restauro: Zeitschrift für Konservierung und Restaurierung* 96, no. 3 (1990), pp.181–188.

⁹ See Tilman Skowroneck, “The 1803 Érard Grand Piano”, *Beethoven the Pianist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 85–116.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 89.



Figure 18. Grand pianoforte by John Broadwood & Sons, c. 1806, restored by Paul Kobald in 2022, used for the performance and recording of the *Waldstein* sonata.

Hence, although Érard and Broadwood are not identical, a well-set-up 1806 Broadwood delivers the very properties the *Waldstein* seems to expect: a five-and-a-half-octave range from FF–c⁴, a foot-operated damper pedal for continuous effects, and a robust, singing tone that allows two-voice *fortissimi* and long-line pedaling to register convincingly. This is practical given the rarity of surviving Érard instruments from this period. Moreover, an 1806 Broadwood provides a sonic palette uniquely suited to Beethoven’s sublime idiom. The raw roughness of the more “rustic” tone of most early nineteenth-century pianos (vs. the more crystalline, synthetic quality of modern built pianos) does not hinder expression; it enhances it, bringing it closer to the Sublime. The instrument’s physical resilience and bold tonal character lend weight and urgency to the sonata’s grand rhetorical statements while allowing for unexpected delicacy and transparency in its more transcendent passages. The expressive power of such a historical instrument lies in its capacity to alternately reveal the roughness and smoothness of Beethoven’s aesthetic—the sublime as something irreducibly intense, provocative, and at times even uncomfortable, and to bind the audible rhetoric of strain, release, and repose directly to the performer’s bodily labour at the keyboard. Equally importantly for the present study, the Broadwood’s physical action characteristics shape the kinaesthetic experience of playing, so that the way my body must move to produce sound becomes a crucial mediator in coupling inward excitement, dread, or exaltation to specific, physical gestures at the instrument.

12.3 Interpreting the Sentimental Narrative

The genre of the sonata, already in the late eighteenth century, was said to explore diverse sentiment.¹¹ Here, the pianist takes on the role of orator and guides the audience through this unfolding narrative. Consequently, I view the *Waldstein* as more than an abstract formal structure. When approaching its sentimental narrative, I view it as a story to tell the listener; as a dramatic vehicle for an emotional, heroic odyssey. Like other sonatas of Beethoven's so-called "heroic" period, it embodies a trajectory that carries the performer—and by extension, the listener—through a succession of intense passions. These include audacious zeal, turbulent struggle, resilience, sublime transcendence, lyrical tenderness, and ultimately jubilant resolution. Beethoven tempers these grand gestures with moments of wit, irony, and comic surprise, such that the work maintains a delicate balance between elevated sublimity and playful humanity.

12.3.1 Allegro con brio

Performing the *Waldstein*'s opening movement (*Allegro con brio*) as a musical orator, I aim to let my own inner feeling be coupled as immediately as possible to Beethoven's notated passionate gestures as I have interpreted them. The texture is in constant ferment—heroism is thrust forward, only to be checked by abrupt turns, sudden silences, and daring deviations. This deliberate extremity encompassing texture, dynamic, tempo, and emotional intensity belongs to Beethoven's idiom and is essential to the work's sublimity. For writers like Burke, the sublime is ignited by magnitude, overwhelming volume, and the tumult of nature like cataracts, storms, thunder, or artillery. These bear down on the senses with such force that the soul is momentarily suspended, filled with awe and dread all at once.¹² Beethoven repeatedly harnesses these extremities including vastness, force, chaos, and tumult, such that the listener's imagination is overwhelmed and elevated at once. But as a performer, as I proceed through the movement, I must also awaken these sensations and feelings in the moment they occur in the text, and the sublime becomes not only an abstract aesthetic category, but a sensation I experience and respond to through the embodied process of interpreting and playing Beethoven's composition. Rhetorical acting techniques are central to allowing my sensibility to grasp and sustain that feeling of sublimity, and the excitement that comes from the extreme physical demands that arise from playing this sonata contribute as well. On another note, these analyses will also deploy the rhetorical figure terminology developed through Chapter 8, demonstrating the continued relevance of these devices to describe rhetorical intent.

The metronome indication for this movement given by Czerny and Moscheles for the *Allegro con brio* (half-note = 88) compels a specifically *intense* posture in execution.¹³ The pounding eighth note chords and the incessant tremolos must simmer and seethe at a velocity that is exhilarating for the

¹¹ See Chapter 7.4.3

¹² Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, pp. 52–66.

¹³ Marten A. Noorduyn, 'Beethoven's Tempo Indications' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2016), p. 310.

listener and perilous for the performer. This technical audacity is not mere display; it is integral to an aesthetic that seeks to excite, terrify, and dazzle the audience with daring intensity. Once more, this relates to Burke's Sublime. The tremolos generate a low, "tremulous, intermitting sound" that, as Burke writes, "is productive of the sublime."¹⁴ The movement's whirlwind and barely "managed" chaos become the crucible in which dread and delight kindle one another. From the performer's side, the sheer physical risk and effort are not incidental but part of the sentimental experience: the way the body labours at this tempo feeds back into the felt sense of dread and exaltation that the sound communicates.

My reading follows a rhetorical framework that treats the score not as a closed object but as a "script" for *actio*, where I co-create the sentimental narrative almost in dialogue with Beethoven himself, through the text he left behind. Within this framework, rhetorical commonplaces and figures act as outward signs into which I pour particular kinds of inward motion. The narrative is subjective in that it is *spoken* by the performer; yet it is anchored in external or "objective" features or commonplaces that enable sentiments to be made intersubjectively understood, first by the performer, and then by the audience. In performance, these objective and subjective elements are continually linked together: commonplaces become real "feeling," and this feeling influences the delivery itself, giving me a feeling of rhetorical agency to express my own ideas in conjunction with what I interpret as Beethoven's. While this interpretation may not necessarily be exactly what Beethoven had in mind, it still provides the artist with a voice to express themselves through music, and the powerful sentiments which make it meaningful to performer and audience alike.

The opening *Hauptsatz* (principal proposition) enters with insistent, bustling repeated chords in C major, confident yet harmonically unsettled, slipping at once to G. As the idea takes shape, anxiety creeps in. Restatement via the figure of *anaphora*¹⁵ pushes the theme, unexpectedly, into F; each iteration bears a slight harmonic "wrong-footing," a perturbation that pricks wonder and curiosity.

¹⁴ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, p. 67.

¹⁵ See Chapter 8.5

Opus 53

Allegro con brio

21.

Musical Example 47. Opening. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 88.

Over these returns, a sly treble figure found first in b. 4—sprung from a tight *appoggiatura*—jabs with ardent audacity, even a trace of comic, witty mockery: a teasing *exornatio* that heightens tension rather than releasing it. Though marked *pianissimo*, a *gradatio* gathers: the initial cheek and bravado darken through a C-minor turn, and the right-hand flurries anxiously with *anaphora* swelling in worry accompanied by threatening chromaticism (G and A flat) in the bass. From this emerges a bombastic, monumental swerve: defiant tutti octaves (bb. 12–13). These express sublimity as the “showing of force.” The low G marked with a fermata denotes a moment of a threatening (albeit soft) grimace; a brief pause to pose and cement that glowering expression, in the manner of an actor striking an attitude.

Beethoven then recasts the *Hauptsatz* in an intensified guise (b. 14) that has a boldness, and courageousness. As Walker notes, “courage is the contempt of any unavoidable danger in the execution of what is resolved upon” and the voice has a firmness and evenness with strong accents: good guidelines on how the pianist should play this section to avoid weakness and feebleness even with the *pianissimo* marking.¹⁶ This sort of tacit rejection of danger is what gives this theme bravado – a forward momentum bordering on brashness. Here, the simmer becomes a froth. Beginning in a whispering *pianissimo* and growing, the tremolos ripple more vigorously (a musical *paronomasia*), and the material is lifted into a higher register (*hyperbaton*) to thrust the proposition to the fore.

¹⁶ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 354.



Musical Example 48. *Paronomasia* of the main subject. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21, Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 88.

Instead of descending by step as before, the theme now climbs by *anaphora*, growing into a laddered *gradatio* towards crisis. The crisis arrives as an *exclamatio*: a rude and then ruder interjection in b. 21 and 22—the second being an augmented-sixth—wrenches toward E minor by *abruptio*. The added dissonance feels accusatory, a sudden admonishing gesture in harmony, and the course veers into peevish agitation. As Walker notes, peevishness, or irritability, expresses itself “like anger but more moderately, with half sentences and broken speeches uttered hastily.”¹⁷ This “hasty” quality is found in the rather flippant sixteenths in the right hand. Next, throughout bb. 23–30, the dominant pedal on B from E minor is stretched taut across a long *gradatio* that seethes with tense, dissonant resonances created by chromatic sixteenths—an angry swarm—whose buzzing confusion rekindles the sublime by means of chaos.

Following some punctuated *sforzando* blows in b. 28, to borrow Vogler's vivid image from his analysis of the *Hamlet* overture, “the dam breaks” in b. 29: a cascade of B major arpeggios releases the built-up pressure and heralds the second subject. They reach the bottom, and in b. 31, broken-octave steps tiptoe forward with suspended expectancy, as if resigned to the inevitable arrival of a stern E-minor second subject. But a rhetorical *ellipsis* intervenes in b. 35, and the rhythmic motion pauses in reflection. On its relation to sublimity, Burke notes that a “sudden beginning, or sudden cessation of sound of any considerable force”¹⁸ can create powerful effects. Beethoven uses just such a cessation to prepare an unexpected turn. Instead of E minor, the clouds part, and the second subject marked *dolce e molto legato* arrives in a transcendent, calm, blissful E major. The texture is now homophonic, chordal, and organ-like, providing a tranquil *antithesis* to the earthly rumblings of the *Hauptsatz*. The new episode is otherworldly in its serenity. In Forkel's terms, this second subject is a *Gegensatz*, a true

¹⁷ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 362.

¹⁸ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, pp. 66–67.

antithesis to the fever and fret of the *Hauptsatz*: the calm eye within the hurricane, or a burst through a stormy cloud layer into a clear, cold stratosphere.

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The image displays a musical score for the transition into the second subject of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, measures 20-31. The score is written for piano and features a variety of musical notations and dynamics. Measures 20-21 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 22 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 23-24 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 25 includes a *p* marking. Measures 26-27 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 28 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 29-30 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 31 includes a *f* marking. Measures 32-33 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 34 includes a *decresc.* marking. Measures 35-36 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 37 includes a *p* marking. Measures 38-39 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 40 includes a *dolce e molto legato* marking. Measures 41-42 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 43 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 44-45 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 46 includes a *p* marking. Measures 47-48 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 49 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 50-51 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 52 includes a *p* marking. Measures 53-54 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 55 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 56-57 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 58 includes a *p* marking. Measures 59-60 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 61 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 62-63 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 64 includes a *p* marking. Measures 65-66 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 67 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 68-69 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 70 includes a *p* marking. Measures 71-72 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 73 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 74-75 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 76 includes a *p* marking. Measures 77-78 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 79 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 80-81 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 82 includes a *p* marking. Measures 83-84 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 85 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 86-87 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 88 includes a *p* marking. Measures 89-90 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 91 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 92-93 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 94 includes a *p* marking. Measures 95-96 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 97 includes a *cresc.* marking. Measures 98-99 show a treble clef with a half note and a quarter note, and a bass clef with a continuous eighth-note pattern. Measure 100 includes a *p* marking.

Musical Example 49. Transition into second subject. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 89.

Because I recorded in Young's temperament (1799), E major against C major registers as subtly "strange"—glassy, icy, and frostily calm—intensifying the "otherworldly" quality of this new subject.

The theme asks to linger with a misty, effervescent weightlessness, which can be identified as a different mode of the sublime (the seeming expansive boundlessness of serenity).

I colour this episode with the shift pedal to *due corde*, letting the tone bloom from two to three strings only later, so that an internal *gradatio* of timbre supports the sense of ethereal emergence. Restated with wistful triplets in b. 42 (again, *paronomasia*: the same thought in a new rhythmic texture), the idea seems to suspend time.

The image displays a musical score for the second subject of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, measures 90 through 99. The score is written for piano and features a series of ascending and descending melodic lines in the right hand, often accompanied by chords or single notes in the left hand. The key signature is C major, and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *dolce*, *cresc.*, *sf*, *ff*, and *decresc.*. The measures are numbered 90, 93, 96, 99, 102, 105, 108, 111, 114, 117, 120, 123, 126, 129, 132, 135, 138, 141, 144, 147, 150, 153, 156, 159, 162, 165, 168, 171, 174, 177, 180, 183, 186, 189, 192, 195, 198, 201, 204, 207, 210, 213, 216, 219, 222, 225, 228, 231, 234, 237, 240, 243, 246, 249, 252, 255, 258, 261, 264, 267, 270, 273, 276, 279, 282, 285, 288, 291, 294, 297, 300, 303, 306, 309, 312, 315, 318, 321, 324, 327, 330, 333, 336, 339, 342, 345, 348, 351, 354, 357, 360, 363, 366, 369, 372, 375, 378, 381, 384, 387, 390, 393, 396, 399, 402, 405, 408, 411, 414, 417, 420, 423, 426, 429, 432, 435, 438, 441, 444, 447, 450, 453, 456, 459, 462, 465, 468, 471, 474, 477, 480, 483, 486, 489, 492, 495, 498, 501, 504, 507, 510, 513, 516, 519, 522, 525, 528, 531, 534, 537, 540, 543, 546, 549, 552, 555, 558, 561, 564, 567, 570, 573, 576, 579, 582, 585, 588, 591, 594, 597, 600, 603, 606, 609, 612, 615, 618, 621, 624, 627, 630, 633, 636, 639, 642, 645, 648, 651, 654, 657, 660, 663, 666, 669, 672, 675, 678, 681, 684, 687, 690, 693, 696, 699, 702, 705, 708, 711, 714, 717, 720, 723, 726, 729, 732, 735, 738, 741, 744, 747, 750, 753, 756, 759, 762, 765, 768, 771, 774, 777, 780, 783, 786, 789, 792, 795, 798, 801, 804, 807, 810, 813, 816, 819, 822, 825, 828, 831, 834, 837, 840, 843, 846, 849, 852, 855, 858, 861, 864, 867, 870, 873, 876, 879, 882, 885, 888, 891, 894, 897, 900, 903, 906, 909, 912, 915, 918, 921, 924, 927, 930, 933, 936, 939, 942, 945, 948, 951, 954, 957, 960, 963, 966, 969, 972, 975, 978, 981, 984, 987, 990, 993, 996, 999, 1002, 1005, 1008, 1011, 1014, 1017, 1020, 1023, 1026, 1029, 1032, 1035, 1038, 1041, 1044, 1047, 1050, 1053, 1056, 1059, 1062, 1065, 1068, 1071, 1074, 1077, 1080, 1083, 1086, 1089, 1092, 1095, 1098, 1101, 1104, 1107, 1110, 1113, 1116, 1119, 1122, 1125, 1128, 1131, 1134, 1137, 1140, 1143, 1146, 1149, 1152, 1155, 1158, 1161, 1164, 1167, 1170, 1173, 1176, 1179, 1182, 1185, 1188, 1191, 1194, 1197, 1200, 1203, 1206, 1209, 1212, 1215, 1218, 1221, 1224, 1227, 1230, 1233, 1236, 1239, 1242, 1245, 1248, 1251, 1254, 1257, 1260, 1263, 1266, 1269, 1272, 1275, 1278, 1281, 1284, 1287, 1290, 1293, 1296, 1299, 1302, 1305, 1308, 1311, 1314, 1317, 1320, 1323, 1326, 1329, 1332, 1335, 1338, 1341, 1344, 1347, 1350, 1353, 1356, 1359, 1362, 1365, 1368, 1371, 1374, 1377, 1380, 1383, 1386, 1389, 1392, 1395, 1398, 1401, 1404, 1407, 1410, 1413, 1416, 1419, 1422, 1425, 1428, 1431, 1434, 1437, 1440, 1443, 1446, 1449, 1452, 1455, 1458, 1461, 1464, 1467, 1470, 1473, 1476, 1479, 1482, 1485, 1488, 1491, 1494, 1497, 1500, 1503, 1506, 1509, 1512, 1515, 1518, 1521, 1524, 1527, 1530, 1533, 1536, 1539, 1542, 1545, 1548, 1551, 1554, 1557, 1560, 1563, 1566, 1569, 1572, 1575, 1578, 1581, 1584, 1587, 1590, 1593, 1596, 1599, 1602, 1605, 1608, 1611, 1614, 1617, 1620, 1623, 1626, 1629, 1632, 1635, 1638, 1641, 1644, 1647, 1650, 1653, 1656, 1659, 1662, 1665, 1668, 1671, 1674, 1677, 1680, 1683, 1686, 1689, 1692, 1695, 1698, 1701, 1704, 1707, 1710, 1713, 1716, 1719, 1722, 1725, 1728, 1731, 1734, 1737, 1740, 1743, 1746, 1749, 1752, 1755, 1758, 1761, 1764, 1767, 1770, 1773, 1776, 1779, 1782, 1785, 1788, 1791, 1794, 1797, 1800, 1803, 1806, 1809, 1812, 1815, 1818, 1821, 1824, 1827, 1830, 1833, 1836, 1839, 1842, 1845, 1848, 1851, 1854, 1857, 1860, 1863, 1866, 1869, 1872, 1875, 1878, 1881, 1884, 1887, 1890, 1893, 1896, 1899, 1902, 1905, 1908, 1911, 1914, 1917, 1920, 1923, 1926, 1929, 1932, 1935, 1938, 1941, 1944, 1947, 1950, 1953, 1956, 1959, 1962, 1965, 1968, 1971, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2016, 2019, 2022, 2025, 2028, 2031, 2034, 2037, 2040, 2043, 2046, 2049, 2052, 2055, 2058, 2061, 2064, 2067, 2070, 2073, 2076, 2079, 2082, 2085, 2088, 2091, 2094, 2097, 2100, 2103, 2106, 2109, 2112, 2115, 2118, 2121, 2124, 2127, 2130, 2133, 2136, 2139, 2142, 2145, 2148, 2151, 2154, 2157, 2160, 2163, 2166, 2169, 2172, 2175, 2178, 2181, 2184, 2187, 2190, 2193, 2196, 2199, 2202, 2205, 2208, 2211, 2214, 2217, 2220, 2223, 2226, 2229, 2232, 2235, 2238, 2241, 2244, 2247, 2250, 2253, 2256, 2259, 2262, 2265, 2268, 2271, 2274, 2277, 2280, 2283, 2286, 2289, 2292, 2295, 2298, 2301, 2304, 2307, 2310, 2313, 2316, 2319, 2322, 2325, 2328, 2331, 2334, 2337, 2340, 2343, 2346, 2349, 2352, 2355, 2358, 2361, 2364, 2367, 2370, 2373, 2376, 2379, 2382, 2385, 2388, 2391, 2394, 2397, 2400, 2403, 2406, 2409, 2412, 2415, 2418, 2421, 2424, 2427, 2430, 2433, 2436, 2439, 2442, 2445, 2448, 2451, 2454, 2457, 2460, 2463, 2466, 2469, 2472, 2475, 2478, 2481, 2484, 2487, 2490, 2493, 2496, 2499, 2502, 2505, 2508, 2511, 2514, 2517, 2520, 2523, 2526, 2529, 2532, 2535, 2538, 2541, 2544, 2547, 2550, 2553, 2556, 2559, 2562, 2565, 2568, 2571, 2574, 2577, 2580, 2583, 2586, 2589, 2592, 2595, 2598, 2601, 2604, 2607, 2610, 2613, 2616, 2619, 2622, 2625, 2628, 2631, 2634, 2637, 2640, 2643, 2646, 2649, 2652, 2655, 2658, 2661, 2664, 2667, 2670, 2673, 2676, 2679, 2682, 2685, 2688, 2691, 2694, 2697, 2700, 2703, 2706, 2709, 2712, 2715, 2718, 2721, 2724, 2727, 2730, 2733, 2736, 2739, 2742, 2745, 2748, 2751, 2754, 2757, 2760, 2763, 2766, 2769, 2772, 2775, 2778, 2781, 2784, 2787, 2790, 2793, 2796, 2799, 2802, 2805, 2808, 2811, 2814, 2817, 2820, 2823, 2826, 2829, 2832, 2835, 2838, 2841, 2844, 2847, 2850, 2853, 2856, 2859, 2862, 2865, 2868, 2871, 2874, 2877, 2880, 2883, 2886, 2889, 2892, 2895, 2898, 2901, 2904, 2907, 2910, 2913, 2916, 2919, 2922, 2925, 2928, 2931, 2934, 2937, 2940, 2943, 2946, 2949, 2952, 2955, 2958, 2961, 2964, 2967, 2970, 2973, 2976, 2979, 2982, 2985, 2988, 2991, 2994, 2997, 3000, 3003, 3006, 3009, 3012, 3015, 3018, 3021, 3024, 3027, 3030, 3033, 3036, 3039, 3042, 3045, 3048, 3051, 3054, 3057, 3060, 3063, 3066, 3069, 3072, 3075, 3078, 3081, 3084, 3087, 3090, 3093, 3096, 3099, 3102, 3105, 3108, 3111, 3114, 3117, 3120, 3123, 3126, 3129, 3132, 3135, 3138, 3141, 3144, 3147, 3150, 3153, 3156, 3159, 3162, 3165, 3168, 3171, 3174, 3177, 3180, 3183, 3186, 3189, 3192, 3195, 3198, 3201, 3204, 3207, 3210, 3213, 3216, 3219, 3222, 3225, 3228, 3231, 3234, 3237, 3240, 3243, 3246, 3249, 3252, 3255, 3258, 3261, 3264, 3267, 3270, 3273, 3276, 3279, 3282, 3285, 3288, 3291, 3294, 3297, 3300, 3303, 3306, 3309, 3312, 3315, 3318, 3321, 3324, 3327, 3330, 3333, 3336, 3339, 3342, 3345, 3348, 3351, 3354, 3357, 3360, 3363, 3366, 3369, 3372, 3375, 3378, 3381, 3384, 3387, 3390, 3393, 3396, 3399, 3402, 3405, 3408, 3411, 3414, 3417, 3420, 3423, 3426, 3429, 3432, 3435, 3438, 3441, 3444, 3447, 3450, 3453, 3456, 3459, 3462, 3465, 3468, 3471, 3474, 3477, 3480, 3483, 3486, 3489, 3492, 3495, 3498, 3501, 3504, 3507, 3510, 3513, 3516, 3519, 3522, 3525, 3528, 3531, 3534, 3537, 3540, 3543, 3546, 3549, 3552, 3555, 3558, 3561, 3564, 3567, 3570, 3573, 3576, 3579, 3582, 3585, 3588, 3591, 3594, 3597, 3600, 3603, 3606, 3609, 3612, 3615, 3618, 3621, 3624, 3627, 3630, 3633, 3636, 3639, 3642, 3645, 3648, 3651, 3654, 3657, 3660, 3663, 3666, 3669, 3672, 3675, 3678, 3681, 3684, 3687, 3690, 3693, 3696, 3699, 3702, 3705, 3708, 3711, 3714, 3717, 3720, 3723, 3726, 3729, 3732, 3735, 3738, 3741, 3744, 3747, 3750, 3753, 3756, 3759, 3762, 3765, 3768, 3771, 3774, 3777, 3780, 3783, 3786, 3789, 3792, 3795, 3798, 3801, 3804, 3807, 3810, 3813, 3816, 3819, 3822, 3825, 3828, 3831, 3834, 3837, 3840, 3843, 3846, 3849, 3852, 3855, 3858, 3861, 3864, 3867, 3870, 3873, 3876, 3879, 3882, 3885, 3888, 3891, 3894, 3897, 3900, 3903, 3906, 3909, 3912, 3915, 3918, 3921, 3924, 3927, 3930, 3933, 3936, 3939, 3942, 3945, 3948, 3951, 3954, 3957, 3960, 3963, 3966, 3969, 3972, 3975, 3978, 3981, 3984, 3987, 3990, 3993, 3996, 3999, 4002, 4005, 4008, 4011, 4014, 4017, 4020, 4023, 4026, 4029, 4032, 4035, 4038, 4041, 4044, 4047, 4050, 4053, 4056, 4059, 4062, 4065, 4068, 4071, 4074, 4077, 4080, 4083, 4086, 4089, 4092, 4095, 4098, 4101, 4104, 4107, 4110, 4113, 4116, 4119, 4122, 4125, 4128, 4131, 4134, 4137, 4140, 4143, 4146, 4149, 4152, 4155, 4158, 4161, 4164, 4167, 4170, 4173, 4176, 4179, 4182, 4185, 4188, 4191, 4194, 4197, 4200, 4203, 4206, 4209, 4212, 4215, 4218, 4221, 4224, 4227, 4230, 4233, 4236, 4239, 4242, 4245, 4248, 4251, 4254, 4257, 4260, 4263, 4266, 4269, 4272, 4275, 4278, 4281, 4284, 4287, 4290, 4293, 4296, 4299, 4302, 4305, 4308, 4311, 4314, 4317, 4320, 4323, 4326, 4329, 4332, 4335, 4338, 4341, 4344, 4347, 4350, 4353, 4356, 4359, 4362, 4365, 4368, 4371, 4374, 4377, 4380, 4383, 4386, 4389, 4392, 4395, 4398, 4401, 4404, 4407, 4410, 4413, 4416, 4419, 4422, 4425, 4428, 4431, 4434, 4437, 4440, 4443, 4446, 4449, 4452, 4455, 4458, 4461, 4464, 4467, 4470, 4473, 4476, 4479, 4482, 4485, 4488, 4491, 4494, 4497, 4500, 4503, 4506, 4509, 4512, 4515, 4518, 4521, 4524, 4527, 4530, 4533, 4536, 4539, 4542, 4545, 4548, 4551, 4554, 4557, 4560, 4563, 4566, 4569, 4572, 4575, 4578, 4581, 4584, 4587, 4590, 4593, 4596, 4599, 4602, 4605, 4608, 4611, 4614, 4617, 4620, 4623, 4626, 4629, 4632, 4635, 4638, 4641, 4644, 4647, 4650, 4653, 4656, 4659, 4662, 4665, 4668, 4671, 4674, 4677, 4680, 4683, 4686, 4689, 4692, 4695, 4698, 4701, 4704, 4707, 4710, 4713, 4716, 4719, 4722, 4725, 4728, 4731, 4734, 4737, 4740, 4743, 4746, 4749, 4752, 4755, 4758, 4761, 4764, 4767, 4770, 4773, 4776, 4779, 4782, 4785, 4788, 4791, 4794, 4797, 4800, 4803, 4806, 4809, 4812, 4815, 4818, 4821, 4824, 4827, 4830, 4833, 4836, 4839, 4842, 4845, 4848, 4851, 4854, 4857, 4860, 4863, 4866, 4869, 4872, 4875, 4878, 4881, 4884, 4887, 4890, 4893, 4896, 4899, 4902, 4905, 4908, 4911, 4914, 4917, 4920, 4923, 4926, 4929, 4932, 4935, 4938, 4941, 4944, 4947, 4950, 4953, 4956, 4959, 4962, 4965, 4968, 4971, 4974, 4977, 4980, 4983, 4986, 4989, 4992, 4995, 4998, 5001, 5004, 5007, 5010, 5013, 5016, 5019, 5022, 5025, 5028, 5031, 5034, 5037, 5040, 5043, 5046, 5049, 5052, 5055, 5058, 5061, 5064, 5067, 5070, 5073, 5076, 5079, 5082, 5085, 5088, 5091, 5094, 5097, 5100, 5103, 5106, 5109, 5112, 5115, 5118, 5121, 5124, 5127, 5130, 5133, 5136, 5139, 5142, 5145, 5148, 5151, 5154, 5157, 5160, 5163, 5166, 5169, 5172, 5175, 5178, 5181, 5184, 5187, 5190, 5193, 5196, 5199, 5202, 5205, 5208, 5211, 5214, 5217, 5220, 5223, 5226, 5229, 5232, 5235, 5238, 5241, 5244, 5247, 5250, 5253, 5256, 5259, 5262, 5265, 5268, 5271, 5274, 5277, 5280, 5283, 5286, 5289, 5292, 5295, 5298, 5301, 5304, 5307, 5310, 5313, 5316, 5319, 5322, 5325, 5328, 5331, 5334, 5337, 5340, 5343, 5346, 5349, 5352, 5355, 5358, 5361, 5364, 5367, 5370, 5373, 5376, 5379, 5382, 5385, 5388, 5391, 5394, 5397, 5400, 5403, 5406, 5409, 5412, 5415, 5418, 5421, 5424, 5427, 5430, 5433, 5436, 5439, 5442, 5445, 5448, 5451, 5454, 5457, 5460, 5463, 5466, 5469, 5472, 5475, 5478, 5481, 5484, 5487, 5490, 5493, 5496, 5499, 5502, 5505, 5508, 5511, 5514, 5517, 5520, 5523, 5526, 5529, 5532, 5535, 5538, 5541, 5544, 5547, 5550, 5553, 5556, 5559, 5562, 5565, 5568, 5571, 5574, 5577, 5580, 5583, 5586, 5589, 5592, 5595, 5598, 5601, 5604, 5607, 5610, 5613, 5616, 5619, 5622, 5625, 5628, 5631, 5634, 5637, 5640, 5643, 5646, 5649, 5652, 5655, 5658, 5661, 5664, 5667, 5670, 5673, 5676, 5679, 5682, 5685, 5688, 5691, 5694, 5697, 5700, 5703, 5706, 5709, 5712, 5715, 5718, 5721, 5724, 5727, 5730, 5733, 5736, 5739, 5742, 5745, 5748, 5751, 5754, 5757, 5760, 5763, 5766, 5769, 5772, 5775, 5778, 5781, 5784, 5787, 5790, 5793, 5796, 5799, 5802, 5805, 5808, 5811, 5814, 5817, 5820, 5823, 5826, 5829, 5832, 5835, 5838, 5841, 5844, 5847, 5850, 5853, 5856, 5859, 5862, 5865, 5868, 5871, 5874, 5877, 5880, 5883, 5886, 5889, 5892, 5895, 5898, 5901, 5904, 5907, 5910, 5913, 5916, 5919, 5922, 5925, 5928, 5931, 5934, 5937, 5940, 5943, 5946, 5949, 5952, 5955, 5958, 5961, 5964, 5967, 5970, 5973, 5976, 5979, 5982, 5985, 5988, 5991, 5994, 5997, 6000, 6003, 6006, 6009, 6012, 6015, 6018, 6021, 6024, 6027, 6030, 6033, 6036, 6039, 6042, 6045, 6048, 6051, 6054, 6057, 6060, 6063, 6066, 6069, 6072, 6075, 6078, 6081, 6084, 6087, 6090, 6093, 6096, 6099, 6102, 6105, 6108, 6111, 6114, 6117, 6120, 6123, 6126, 6129, 6132, 6135, 6138, 6141, 6144, 6147, 6150, 6153, 6156, 6159, 6162, 6165, 6168, 6171, 6174, 6177, 6180, 6183, 6186, 6189, 6192, 6195, 6198, 6201, 6204, 6207, 6210, 6213, 6216, 6219, 6222, 6225, 6228, 6231, 6234, 6237, 6

From that height the narrative descends gently, going from the higher register of the *fortepiano* into the lower (*hyperbaton*), which produces a respective shift in timbre that restores contact with the earthly realm (bb. 46–49). But E major’s aura does not evaporate; it is affirmed by increasingly confident bursts—fervent, grand, mighty—rhetorical *confirmatio* of the new transcendent spirit. Momentum builds across a long, drawn-out *gradatio* beginning in b. 49: crescendo growing in certainty and warmth with measured *accelerando*; rhythmic motion thickens from single-hand triplets to both hands and then to a feverish flurry of sixteenths. The spirit soars in ecstatic, rapturous excitement, building confidence and boldness, swelling until the dam bursts again in b. 64. An *abruptio* in the form of an unexpected modulation to A major with the introduction of the 7th (b. 63) pitches into a torrent of downward-rushing figuration, like the body tumbling from a cliff and catching air only in snatches. The spirit’s hopes are dashed, but only momentarily, as it determinedly pushes once more to fly heavenward with renewed vigour and a daring edge, with powerful chords in the left hand (b. 65). Another *gradatio* follows, this time using hammering repetition to anchor the now heroic aura of E major’s authority—sublime force as the guarantor of order with powerful octave arpeggios marked *sforzando* in b. 66.

Once more, the texture drops out in an unexpected *ellipsis* in b. 68: the sound withdraws into mist. It emerges from that obscurity into a trill that builds in rhythmic intensity (bb. 72–73) until a final E-major affirmation coalesces (b. 74), briefly resolute and triumphant, until it is soon challenged. Here I once more use the *una corda* pedal to create the *gradatio* in timbre: beginning on one string, then two, then three—so that the timbre builds along with the flurry of the trill and tremolo textures. This closes the long period. Following this closure, a modulatory transition enacts *dubitatio*, creating a sudden uncertainty that challenges what for some time seemed to be the certainty of the E major “world.” The transition leads either into a repetition of the exposition, or a transition to what later theorists call the sonata’s “development.” When repeating the exposition, I do so with heightened commitment; rhetorically, repeated claims must not sound merely the same but *more necessary*, more urgent—an intensified amplification of what has already been said.

The musical score for measures 67-88 of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata is presented in a single system with six staves. The notation includes various dynamic markings such as *sf*, *fp*, *decresc.*, *pp*, *cresc.*, and *p*. The texture is highly complex, featuring rapid sixteenth-note passages, dense chords, and intricate rhythmic patterns. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The score is marked with measure numbers 67 through 88 at the beginning of each staff.

Musical Example 51. Close of the exposition. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 91.

In the sonata's "development" section which follows, Forkel's *Zergliederungen*—"partitions" or dissections—go to work.¹⁹ Motives from the *Hauptsatz* and the *Gegensatz* are taken apart, re-ordered, set against themselves: contrast, refutation, antithesis, and counter-affirmation alternate with breathtaking rapidity (bb. 90–142). Beethoven pursues extremity both in modulatory distance (wandering to remote keys) and in texture: chaotic triplets, and thunderous, rumbling figures. The listener is thrust from rain to hail, from violent wind to thunder, then into a serene, icy calm—a sequence mirroring inner turmoil and unsettled anxiety.

¹⁹ See Chapter 7.4.2

The image displays a musical score for the middle section of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, measures 92-109. The score is written for piano (p) and features a complex, rhythmic melody in the right hand and a steady, eighth-note accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature is C major, and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into six systems, each containing two staves (treble and bass clef). Measure numbers 92, 97, 100, 103, 106, and 109 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. Dynamic markings include *p* (piano), *cresc.* (crescendo), *f* (forte), and *pp* (pianissimo). A trill is marked with an asterisk (*) in measure 103. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and triplets.

Musical Example 52. Middle section. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, pp. 92–94.

This page contains six systems of musical notation for piano, spanning measures 112 to 127. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The notation includes various musical notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first system (measures 112-114) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system (measures 115-117) continues the melodic and harmonic development. The third system (measures 118-120) features a prominent bass line. The fourth system (measures 121-123) shows a change in the bass line's texture. The fifth system (measures 124-126) includes a key signature change to one sharp (F#). The sixth system (measures 127) concludes the page with a final chord in the new key signature.

130

133

136

139

142

145

f *p* *f* *p*

pp

decresc.

cresc.

At length the agitation wanes (bb. 137–142), and a very extended *gradatio* prepares the return of the *Hauptsatz* in the recapitulation. Here, the frightful thunderous rumbling of the bass—enabled by an English-action instrument’s resonance and body of tone—becomes the ground of rhetorical *confirmatio*. Ascending affirmations pile up across a long dominant, until C major is not so much re-entered as re-compelled into being in calamitous tumult (bb. 154–156). The *Hauptsatz* strides back—but not without some inconfident perplexity. An unexpected A-flat interrupts (b. 168): a moment

of *dubitat* in which the orator seems lost in thought, uncertain of the path, before suddenly finding the thread again. Here, the performer must really use their rhetorical acting skills to sell this moment: otherwise, the aposiopesis in each pause for contemplation will lack the suspension and tension required to make the moment convincing. The performer should really follow the directions of Engel and Walker here, becoming lost in thought, pausing, and resetting into a new behavioural mode.

95

*) *f* nach Autograph; fehlt in Originalausgabe. *) *f* according to autograph; missing in original edition. *) *f* selon l'autographe; manque dans l'édition originale.

Musical Example 53. Return to main subject. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 95.

The musical score consists of six systems of piano and violin staves. Measure numbers 189, 192, 196, 203, 207, and 211 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The notation includes various dynamics such as *f*, *decresc.*, *p*, *dolce*, *cresc.*, and *sf*. It also features articulation marks like slurs and accents, and specific performance instructions like *una corda* (implied by the context of the text). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

Musical Example 54. Second subject return. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 97.

From here the movement recapitulates and consolidates. The second theme opens, intriguingly, into a tremulous A major (b. 186)—like a delightful memory of the earlier E-major otherworld. Its first statement is in large chords, and I used the *una corda* to give them an ethereal, harp-like quality. But this moment is short lived: this initial less secure statement quickly modulates, eventually relaxing into its much warmer form, clothed now in C major's noble simplicity (b. 202). The iciness of the remote keys (E and A major) has vanished; warmth and tenderness now shine through in playful triplets, a

sentiment of heartfelt sincerity more at home. The sonata embraces this turn, and the same material is recapitulated, but transformed into a much more earnest, friendly tenderness that slowly evolves into a noble heroism.

99

The musical score consists of six systems of piano and violin staves. Measure numbers 234, 238, 242, 246, 250, and 254 are indicated at the beginning of each system. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The dynamics include *fp* (fortissimo piano), *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), *f* (forte), *sf* (sforzando), and *ff* (fortissimo). There are also markings for *cresc.* (crescendo). The score shows a complex interplay between the piano and violin parts, with the piano often providing a harmonic and rhythmic foundation while the violin plays more melodic and technically demanding passages.

Musical Example 55. Coda. Allegro con brio from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 99–101.

260

cresc. *pp*

264

pp

267

cresc.

270

f *sf*

273

sf *sf* *sf* *sf*

276

ff *f*

277

278

281

285

293

298

sf

fp

cresc.

sf

p dolce

cresc.

sf

p

cresc.

p

cresc.

p

a tempo

ri - tar - dan - do

cresc.

p

pp

cresc.

ff

f

ff

The musical score consists of six systems of piano music. The first system (measures 277-278) features a treble and bass staff. Measure 277 has a forte (*sf*) dynamic. Measure 278 has a fortissimo (*fp*) dynamic. The second system (measures 279-280) shows a crescendo (*cresc.*) in the bass staff. The third system (measures 281-284) includes a forte (*sf*) dynamic and a piano dolce (*p dolce*) dynamic. The fourth system (measures 285-292) contains multiple dynamics including *cresc.*, *sf*, *p*, and *cresc.*. The fifth system (measures 293-297) is marked *a tempo* and includes the lyrics *ri - tar - dan - do*, with dynamics *cresc.*, *p*, *pp*, and *cresc.*. The sixth system (measures 298-301) features fortissimo (*ff*) and forte (*f*) dynamics.

Yet Beethoven reserves one last turn: the coda, the *peroratio*, where passion will blaze once more to dazzle the senses. The *peroratio* begins with a jolt (b. 249)—an *abruptio* into a mysterious and

bizarre D-flat major. The *Hauptsatz* reappears in its most vehement, turbulent statement, modulating under increasing dissonant pressure, climbing through explosive diminished-seventh volleys (*abruptio* upon *abruptio* in bb. 252–259) into a final episode that reshuffles the principal material with fresh invention. Virtuosity now becomes a kind of comic brinkmanship: *anaphora* and *gradatio* accelerate toward a high climax where the earnest brightness of C major triumph—poised in the 6-position as though held aloft on a glowing upper note—bursts forth in flurried triplets in b. 275. The exertion is palpable, growing chromatically once more with an augmented stretch in b. 275, followed by a forward-rushing motion without relief (bb. 276–284), before an *exclamatio* in b. 285—dominant-seventh cries and downward glissandi—pleads for mercy and, in pleading, finds calm in the most earnest, candid tender statement of the warm *dolce* second subject in b. 287. This final call to sincere warmth, brotherhood, and amiability embodies the compassionate core of the human soul. But resolution proves shy. The phrase breaks off by *ellipsis* (bb. 290), tries again (bb. 292), and falters. Between each attempt is a fermata, creating *aposiopesis*—the charged silence—keeping suspense alive, as if words fail on the verge of confession. At last courage returns, as the *Hauptsatz* re-enters (b. 295) with playful drama, and the ending, both jocular and grand, releases the tension with a smile that has known storm and serenity alike.

Across this arc, Beethoven's rhetoric of extremes—vastness, loudness, suddenness, trembling sonority—realizes Burke's catalogue of the sublime, yet never as abstract effect. Each device is linked to sentiment, to communicable passion, and to the *inventio* and *dispositio* of a coherent oration. The performer's risk, the instrument's capacities (from the thunder of the bass to the *una corda*'s harp-like whisper), and the listener's imagination conspire to turn *Waldstein*'s first movement into a drama of wonder: from boiling turbulence to crystalline transcendence, from peevish sting to magnanimous warmth, from *dubitatio* to bold, heroic *confirmatio*. To play it at Beethoven's pace is to accept the dare—and in accepting it, to let terror and delight mingle until they become the sublime.

12.3.2 Adagio molto

The second movement, in F major and marked *Adagio molto*, functions as a brief interval of reprieve and repose between the intensities of the first and third movements. I adopted Czerny's metronome marking of M.M. 108 on the sixteenth for this movement as a reference, although I sometimes deviated from it as a consequence of expressive tempo rubato.²⁰ This momentary tranquility though is provisional. What begins as calm and wistful reflection soon becomes increasingly restless, as though the movement were not so much a place of rest as a suspended psychological passage through which the music must travel before the finale (third movement) can begin.

²⁰ Noorduyn, 'Beethoven's Tempo Indications', p. 310.

Introduzione
Adagio molto

pp *ten.* *cresc.*

6 *sf* *p* *decresc.* *pp* *rinforzando* *sf* *sf* *decresc.*

14 *p* *rinforzando* *sf* *sf* *decresc.* *p*

18 *cresc.* *sf* *p* *cresc.* *sf* *decresc.*

22 *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.*

26 *sf* *sf* *decresc.*

103

26 *pp* *sf*

Attacca subito il Rondo

Musical Example 56. Adagio molto from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 102–103.

The *Hauptsatz* emerges from a low pedal F in the bass (b. 1), but the apparent stability of this foundation is immediately unsettled, allowing the melody to inflect upwards, which instills perturbation.²¹ Already in the middle of the first bar, an augmented-sixth harmony disturbs the consonance, posing a question (*interrogatio*) in a pressing manner similar to the methods used by Cicero and Demosthenes.²² In bar 2, the question is answered by a stern E-major chord. In performance, I give the *interrogatio* a slight bite in the attack, allowing its perturbed harmonic condition to register as a pressing, or probing question. The ensuing E-major chord, marked *portato*, is comparatively smoother and more contained: not a release into repose, but a moment of grave and somewhat distant composure. This simple two-bar idea is then developed through *gradatio* until bar 6, where a bittersweet dominant-seventh chord, emphasized by a *sforzando*, appears to herald the return of the opening F-major tranquility. This anticipated return is nevertheless averted through a form of musical *abruptio* in bar 9. It results in a turn towards D minor, which softens the preceding tension into a more tender melancholy, with an *exclamatio* crying of gentle complaint through a swelling hairpin. The phrase finally subsides into a gentle F-major close, descending into the low register as though withdrawing into itself. Bar 10 then introduces a strikingly different affect: a more comic, coy, and slightly cheeky opposition to the opening material, ornamented with small chromatic flourishes. The syncopations, sharpened by *sforzandi*, create a quality of playful imbalance, as though the music repeatedly steps off balance and catches itself. The humour is delicate rather than boisterous, arising from timing, displacement, and the subtle agogic exaggeration of the gestures.

By bar 14, however, the playful character has given way to something more earnest and yearning, like an expression of love. Built upon a F-major 6-chord harmony, the phrase gathers emotional momentum through the crescendo. I understand this as analogous to the gestures of love described in rhetorical and theatrical treatises. For example, in Walker:

Love gives a soft serenity to the countenance, a languishing to the eye, a sweetness to the voice, and a tenderness to the whole frame; when intreating, it clasps the hands, with intermingled fingers to the breast; when declaring, the right [hand] is attended by trembling hesitation and confusion.²³

Such gestures are painted by the musical melody and harmony. The urgency and motion of the tempo and the dotted rhythms of the hands recall to my imagination an image of the hands pushed forward, clasped to the breast, with the eyes turned upwards with sweetness in wistful expectation. The crescendo thus creates not merely an increase in volume, but a kind of emotional inertia, as though the gesture were being carried beyond the speaker's control in a motion of desperation and trepidation.²⁴ This

²¹ See Chapter 7.3.3

²² See Chapter 8.3

²³ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. 2, pp. 304–05.

²⁴ See Chapter 4.2.2

yearning is abruptly checked by the sudden turn to the minor mode on the final beat of bar 15: a sudden disappointment, or rejection of the declaration. As Walker notes, this sort of dismissal with approbation must maintain “a kind aspect and tone of voice” and is accompanied by a gesture with “the right hand open, the palm upwards, gently waved towards the person.”²⁵ In performance, I believe this would mean maintaining the sweetness and suppleness of tone on the pianoforte, without pushing into a more forceful, strained, or choked sound, all the while allowing the image of the gesture in the imagination to guide the way the harmonic motion unfolds agogically. This is achieved by a sensitive touch and gentle sensibility. Here, a sad thought has intruded, and the accumulated impulse gradually subsides into a more melancholic languor, punctuated by heaving chords (bb. 16–17). This prepares the protagonist to make another attempt, returning again to restate the *Hauptsatz*.

When the *Hauptsatz* returns in bar 17, it does so through variation, or *paranomasia*: the original thought is restated in altered form and once again expanded through *gradatio*. By bar 21, however, the music has evolved into a scene of almost silent horror. Each right-hand leap, preceded by its dotted rhythm, may be heard as an *exclamatio*: a succession of cries (Mattheson’s third class²⁶), each inflected by a different passion. Anxiety mounts through the increasingly unstable succession of dissonances, including the renewed appearance of the augmented sixth. In bar 22, the *exclamatio* becomes almost threatening, and immediately after recoils with terror from the menace. A cadential six-four ushers in the shadow of F minor, only for this momentary direction to be lost again in the diminished triad on B. The music seems repeatedly to grasp at a harmonic path and then find it withdrawn. Consistent with Austin’s method, when performing, I especially tried to imagine each passion right before it came, allowing it to affect my delivery of each of the gestures, such that the slight variations of affect modified my accentuation and timing in response to my sensibility to each passion.²⁷

In bar 23, the exclamation cries out with something approaching panic. As Walker notes, fear when “violent and sudden, opens wide the eyes and mouth, shortens the nose, gives the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with deadly paleness”²⁸ The implied motion of this is sudden, violent, and jarring, and I achieved this with the *sforzando*. The shifting bass, and consequent harmonic instability create an affect of *dubitatio*: the orator is lost, unable to determine how to proceed, and can only call out in bewilderment. The anguish intensifies through faster rhythmic motion and accumulating emotional momentum, building towards a climax in bar 25. Yet the climax itself becomes the moment of rescue. The sudden dominant seventh on G announces the return of C major—and with it, warmth, orientation, and certainty. What had sounded like anguished cries is retrospectively transformed into an appeal that has finally received an answer, and it unfolds as a sort of pleasant wonder. Relevantly, as

²⁵ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 396.

²⁶ See Chapter 8.1

²⁷ See Chapter 4.2.1

²⁸ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 329.

Walker notes, “if the object of wonder comes gently to the mind and arrests the attention by its beauty or grandeur, it excites admiration, which is a mixture of approbation and wonder.”²⁹ On wonder and admiration specifically, Walker writes that:

Wonder or amazement, opens the eyes, and makes them appear very prominent. It sometimes raises them to the skies, but more frequently fixes them on the object; the mouth is open, and the hands are held up nearly in the attitude of fear; the voice is at first low, but so emphatical, that every word is pronounced slowly and with energy: when, by the discovery of something excellent in the object of wonder, the emotion may be called admiration, the eyes are raised, the hands lifted up, or clapped together, and the voice elated with expressions of rapture.³⁰

This provided a very productive bodily aspect and experience which I found productive in feeling and making the transition from anxious terror to a warmer admiration. I was inspired to play the leaping octave exclamations (bb. 24–25) as exclamations of rapture, but with a sort of attack and articulation that would read as elated rather than simply accented or loud, which could seem violent or manic and undercut the affect I want to express. They begin high and slowly descend into the tenor register as the moment of discovery becomes more familiar. Making sure that the touch and tone of these gestures remain within this affect and does not go too far into harshness can only be accomplished by an astute operation of taste.³¹

From this point, the accumulated tension begins to dissipate. By bar 26, the motion has slowed into the relaxed stillness of the low bass chords, and the ensuing cadence assumes a warm, almost companionable character. It does not bring the movement to an autonomous conclusion so much as gently open a door. The final bars thus fulfil the movement’s transitional function: after passing through wistfulness, humour, longing, anxiety, and momentary terror, the music arrives at a state of renewed confidence from which the opening of the third movement can emerge.

12.3.3 Rondo

The third movement, in C major and marked *Allegretto moderato*, begins in a state of calm, heartfelt tranquillity. Its opening is touched by shyness, yet it also possesses warmth, tenderness, and an almost innocent earnestness. The theme is exceedingly simple, but its simplicity is neither empty nor naïve in a pejorative sense. Rather, it has the directness of an honest utterance: measured, consonant, and sustained by rhythms whose regularity communicates certainty and stability. There is something pastoral in this opening—a sense of natural grace, unforced charm, and quiet contentment.

²⁹ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 347.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 348.

³¹ See Chapter 5.4.4

Allegretto moderato

The musical score is written for piano and consists of five systems. The first system begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and a 'Red.' marking. The second system features a piano (*pp*) dynamic and two asterisks (*). The third system also starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a 'Red.' marking. The fourth system continues with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and an asterisk (*). The fifth system is marked with a crescendo (*cresc.*) and a decrescendo (*decresc.*). The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

Musical Example 57. *Hauptsatz* from the Rondo from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 103–04.

31 *sempre pp*

36

42 *cresc.*

48 *p* *decresc.* *cresc.* *tr.*

54 *tr.* *ff* *tr.*

58 *ff* *f* *tr.* *3*

At the same time, the theme inhabits an unusually expansive acoustic and physical space. The right hand supplies the gently undulating arpeggios upon which the melody rests, forming a resonant cushion around the melodic line. The left hand must repeatedly cross over the right in order to articulate a pedal point in the bass and the main melody in the upper register, moving rapidly between the low

bass and the treble. The resulting sonority encompasses a broad span of the instrument, allowing the different registers to resonate together. This expansiveness is not merely heard but physically experienced by the pianist, whose body must traverse the keyboard in order to bring the melody into being. The gesture of crossing the hands thus contributes directly to the affect of openness: the musical space is enlarged through the visible and kinaesthetic breadth of the performer's movement.

I believe that Beethoven's original pedal indications are essential to this conception. They allow the bass, arpeggiated accompaniment, and simple melody to mingle within a warm cloud of resonance. On the Broadwood grand, the comparatively rapid decay of the sound makes it possible to follow these pedal markings without producing the excessive harmonic blurring that can arise on a modern concert grand. The harmonies remain distinguishable even while their resonances overlap. I therefore roughly follow Beethoven's pedal markings, treating the resulting resonance as part of the movement's fundamental texture and expressive conception.

A passage from Georg Joseph Vogler's *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule* offers a particularly appropriate picturesque rhetorical description for the general character, structure, and tempo of a rondo, which I found constructive for my own interpretation:

The entire charm of the rondo lies in its whimsical tone, its rustic sentiment, the gentle easing off from intensity, a faint restraint in tempo, the sweet tranquillity in the musical grove; as though the bow or the fingers had wandered through tangled thickets, waded through mouldering ditches, scaled the gentle hills and scrambled over steep ridges: this tranquillity, to which a swaying movement is added, and gently, almost imperceptibly, the first—oh, the gallant, the naive—song of ambrosia wafts forth, and with tender, hushed fervour re-emerges; is this not the most vivid depiction of Elysium? The listeners, who stood motionless with their mouths agape, drew in their breath; their eyes fixed on Orpheus, then their joyful exclamations; their loud cries and sighs—the friendly sharing and public expression of the delight with which their hearts were overflowing; the restless search for expressions for which words fail; but the audience doesn't say this, do they? They felt it even more intensely.³²

³² : so bestehet doch die ganze Bezauberung des Rondo in einem launigten Tone, ländlichen Gefhmade, Das gelinde Abfallen von der Stärke eine ohnmächtige Zurückhaltung der Geschwindigkeit die süsse Ruhe im musikalischen Hain, da der Bogen oder die Finger scheinen durch storrigte Gebüsch ge wandert, durch modernde Gräben gewaden, die gahe Hügel überstiegen und auf steilen Genburgen herum geklettert zu haben, diese Ruhe, wozu eine -schwans kende Bewegung beitrith, und sanft leid ganz Unvermerkt das Erste o das galante das naife Gesang Ambrosien düstet, und mit zärtlicher Hals: siarrigkeit fi) wieder hervorfhmingt; ist das nicht die lebhafteste Vorsiedlung des Elisiums Die Zuho- „rer, die unbeweglich Fassen den Mund offen hatten den Athem einzogen; die Augen starr an den Orpheus Hefteten alsdann ihr freudiges Auffahren; ihr lautes Geschrei und Seufzer die freundschaftliche Mitteilung und öffentliche Aeusserung des Vergnügens wovon ihr Herz überschwemmtet war; die unruhige Wahl ver Ausdrücke wozu Wörter fehlen; tvas sagen die Zuhörer nicht wahr fie empfar den noch viel mehr. Vogler, *Betrachtungen der Mannheimer Tonschule*, Bd. 1, pp. 7–8.

Vogler's description is relevant not because it refers specifically to Beethoven's sonata, but because it articulates a contemporary ideal of rondo performance that illuminates the expressive world of this movement. The charm of the rondo depends upon a "faint restraint in tempo," a swaying tranquillity, a rustic or pastoral simplicity, and a melodic speaking that emerges with "tender, hushed fervour." Its "natural" simplicity is therefore inseparable from grace and even nobility. I believe that the music should not be hurried through as though its only purpose were to prepare the later virtuosity. Its initial calm must be allowed to unfold with sufficient spaciousness for the listener to enter its imaginary grove.

However, Vogler's picturesque landscape is not uniformly placid. His performer wanders through thickets and ditches, over hills and steep ridges, before the song of Elysium can re-emerge. The metaphor anticipates the structure of Beethoven's movement, whose later episodes lead the listener through increasingly difficult emotional terrain. The rondo theme represents not merely a recurring melody but a state of orientation—a musical home whose warmth becomes more precious each time it is threatened or lost. Vogler also describes the sublime effect that such a rondo might produce: listeners stand transfixed, momentarily deprived of words, their thoughts displaced by an overflowing experience of joy. In this manner, the inherent simplicity of the opening is not the antithesis of sublimity, nor is it banal or superficial. Instead, it serves as a crucial conduit for amplifying its transcendent impact. For my performance, this meant not trying to wring more from something whose essence is simple: to simply imagine this feeling of contentment and simply just allow the blissful consonances to ravish my sensibility without adding any overwrought affectatious accentuation or rubato. Hence, what comes naturally through inner feeling should inhabit my outward delivery.

Czerny's metronome indication of M.M. 100 provides a suitably relaxed but gently mobile tempo.³³ At this pace, the movement retains its *Allegretto* character without sacrificing its tranquillity. The crossing of the hands can remain supple without breathless anxiety, the arpeggios can resound, and the melody can speak with simplicity rather than haste. This tempo also establishes the necessary contrast with the movement's later transformations, particularly the frenzy of the final *Prestissimo*.

The opening theme initially remains close to its C-major roots, but it soon begins to wander. In bar 15, the sudden appearance of C-minor is like a cloud passing momentarily across the sun. The contrast functions as a small *antithesis*: warmth is opposed by shadow, and certainty by doubt. Major and minor begin to alternate, and the repeated gestures from bars 13 to 24 acquire the insistent character of *anaphora*. Each recurrence presses the thought forward while subtly altering its emotional complexion. Eventually, the right hand assumes the material alone. The melody rises, the sixteenth notes become increasingly animated, and a transformation occurs through harmony rather than through

³³ Noorduyn, 'Beethoven's Tempo Indications', p. 310.

any abrupt change of thematic identity. Yet the agitation does not overwhelm the opening character. The flurried notes gradually descend, their energy dissipates, and tranquillity returns.

Bars 31–55 offer a more elaborate *paronomasia* of the original *Hauptsatz*. The thought is recognizably the same, but it is now more cheerful and elevated in spirit. The melody appears in left-hand octaves, increasing both its fullness and its spatial breadth. The effect is still charming and tranquil, but the initial shyness has begun to yield to wonder and quiet awe. The theme seems to have discovered something of its own expressive potential. The alternation between C major and C minor returns within this restatement, and the resulting anxiety develops through *gradatio*. When the right-hand trill enters in bar 51, its buzzing continuity adds urgency to the increasingly unsettled harmony, pressing forward the emotional momentum. What had first been a passing cloud now exerts a more persistent pressure upon the theme. Nevertheless, the music responds not by retreating but by expanding. In bars 55–62, the *Hauptsatz* is presented for a third time in a grandiose, majestic, *fortissimo* transformation. The opening tranquillity and shyness have been swept away. It is as though the sun has burst through the clouds: the melody now appears in the right hand, accompanied by a boisterous trill and regal flourishes in the left. The simple utterance has acquired public confidence and splendour.

The first principal episode begins in bar 63 with excited triplet figures that accumulate through another *gradatio*. The movement appears poised to continue its cheerful expansion, but in bar 70 an abrupt interruption—an *abruptio*—forcibly diverts the narrative into A minor. The new affect is furious, but it is not one of uncontrolled or frivolous rage. It is stern, steadfast, and righteous: the anger of an orator who believes that indignation is morally justified. The texture grows increasingly full and forceful. Triplets in the right hand are set against monumental octaves and chords in the bass. At bar 86, a stern and reproachful idea emerges in punctuated staccato octaves, expressing bitterness and resentment. The gesture recalls the sudden flash of hatred in the eye described by Walker: an outwardly brief sign that nevertheless reveals the intensity of the passion within.³⁴ In the *paronomasia* beginning around bar 87, the emotional pressure becomes still greater. Sixteenth notes in the bass are set against the continuing triplets, while stabbing *sforzandi* punctuate the discourse, creating a sort of chaos.

Between bars 92 and 98, however, the reproach begins to ebb. The gestures lose momentum and become fainter, as though the original accusation were now being remembered rather than directly uttered. At bar 98, a weak echo of the *Hauptsatz* motive appears in A minor. The rondo theme, previously the bearer of warmth and stability, is reduced to a tender and melancholy recollection. It sounds like the memory of home heard from a great distance.

³⁴ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. 2, pp. 313–17.

367

87 *sf* *p* *ff*

91 *sf* *p* *decresc.*

96 *pp* *f* *sf* *p* *ff*

103 *sf* *p* *ff* *sf* *p* *decresc.*

112 *pp* *sempre pp.*

118 *pp*

* *Red.*

The musical score consists of six systems of piano music, each with a measure number in a circle at the beginning. The notation is in treble and bass clefs. Dynamics include *sf* (sforzando), *p* (piano), *ff* (fortissimo), *pp* (pianissimo), and *decresc.* (decrescendo). There are also markings for *Red.* (Reduction) and asterisks (*) indicating specific points in the score.

This subdued statement is answered in bar 102 by a sudden *fortissimo* outburst of the *Hauptsatz* motive in F major. Its exaggerated zeal is perhaps deliberately excessive: jaunty, jocular, and almost too emphatic in its attempt to contradict the preceding melancholy. It acts as a counterargument, rejecting the morose A-minor version through an assertion of confidence. The ensuing transition settles upon a dominant pedal that prepares the return of C major. This becomes a monumental transformation and, rhetorically, a kind of *confirmatio*. The competing statements have been heard and tested; the return to the tonic now refutes them and establishes the principal theme as the movement's true proposition. In a manner consistent with Forkel's understanding of musical logic, the passage makes the argumentative and persuasive dimensions of the composition perceptible.³⁵ The *Hauptsatz* is not simply repeated: its validity is demonstrated.

The rondo theme returns fully in bar 114. Its restoration is substantial, but not final, for the movement's most harrowing departure begins in bar 175. Once again, an *abruptio* breaks the continuity. From the lowest and most resonant registers of the piano, a dark and menacing theme emerges. Its power depends in part upon the historical piano's bass: the register is not merely deep but dark, resonant, and reverberating, giving the theme a threatening dimension. The material develops through both *paronomasia* and *gradatio* until it reaches a climax around bar 217. By this point, its fury has become genuinely frightening. Chromatic triplets churn through the texture while the great bass octaves punctuate the discourse with violent force. This is one of the movement's most sublime passages, not despite its technical extremity but partly because of it. The pianist is required to approach the limits of the instrument and of physical execution. In my performance, I sought an extreme dynamic intensity, particularly in the bass, where the Broadwood can produce massive, sharply defined octaves. The treble must be treated more carefully, since overplaying it can choke the sound; the bass, by contrast, can project the thunderous punctuation upon which the passage's monumentality depends.

This results in an affectivity of rage that seems only barely contained before erupting into fiery bombast. This episode is stormy, overwhelming, and almost all-consuming: an image of anger so complete that it threatens to cloud human judgement. As Walker duly notes:

Anger, when violent, expresses itself with rapidity, noise, harshness, [...] It wrinkles the brows, enlarges and heaves the nostrils, strains the muscles, clinches the fist, stamps with the foot, and gives a violent agitation to the whole body. The voice assumes the highest tone it can adopt consistently with force and loudness, though sometimes to express anger with uncommon energy, the voice assumes a low and forcible tone.³⁶

³⁵ See Chapter 7.4.2

³⁶ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, Vol. II, p. 318.

Consequently, I used these external features of anger to help sell the affect more convincingly, as the episode uses both the rumblings of the “low and forcible tone” and the “highest” register to depict fury (an effective *hyperbaton*).

Assuming such a feeling of rage when performing can cloud judgement, so some distance is required here. The technical difficulty of the chromatic triplets creates a particular interpretive challenge. It is necessary to maintain sufficient control for the passage to remain intelligible, yet excessive caution can deprive it of the urgency upon which its expressive force depends. The performer must therefore exercise sense and sensibility: reason and emotion, guarded by taste, balancing technical command with a willingness to inhabit the extremity of the passion.³⁷

³⁷ See Chapter 4.1.2

37I

180

184

188

191

195

199

sf

This musical score is for a piano piece, spanning measures 180 to 199. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass staff. The music features a variety of textures, including arpeggiated chords, flowing sixteenth-note passages, and sustained chords. Measure 180 begins with a treble staff arpeggio and a bass staff accompaniment. Measures 184 and 188 show more complex chordal structures. Measure 191 features a rapid sixteenth-note run in the treble. Measure 195 includes a forte (*sf*) dynamic marking. The piece concludes in measure 199 with a final chordal structure.

The concluding chords of this period, in bars 217–220, are strikingly simple after the preceding chromatic turbulence. *Fortissimo* C octaves close the storm with directness, grandeur, and finality. Their simplicity makes them seem almost supernatural: the torrent terminates not through gradual exhaustion, but through a succession of monumental blows. As C.P.E. Bach noted, unison harmony can be productive of grandeur and sublimity.³⁸ Beethoven, I believe, uses this principle very effectively here. The *fortissimo* fades, and the repeated octaves become echoes of distant thunder, marked by the decrescendo.

From bar 221, echoes of the *Hauptsatz* begin to appear in contrasting tonal shades. The rage has subsided, and the orator has recovered a cooler and more measured composure. Yet the restoration of self-command does not immediately produce a solution. The theme is enumerated in A-flat major, F minor, and D-flat major, as though the speaker were considering a series of possible paths. None provides the desired resolution. The storm may be over, but the music no longer knows how to return home.

³⁸ Bach, *Versuch*, Part II, Chapter 22, §3.

Musical Example 60. Second principal episode and restatement of rondo theme from the Rondo from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 110-13.

273 *pp* *ped.* *

277 *pp* *ped.* *

281 *ped.* *

285 *f* *decresc.* *sempre pp* *ped.* *

289 *ped.* *

294 *f* *ped.* *

299

303

307

311

sf

decresc.

p

pp

sempre più

f

ff

The ensuing passage becomes a kind of odyssey, animated by yearning for the warmth and stability of the rondo theme. From bar 232, the wandering assumes a syncopated, chordal form and moves through a succession of keys. The syncopation gives a sense of agitation; of trepidation, an unstable rhythmic motion that feels queasy. The music resembles a ship driven off course, testing one direction after another while drifting ever farther from land. Its dissonant harmonies, unstable tonal structure, and limping syncopations communicate perplexity, uncertainty, and anxiety. The contrast with the consonant and rhythmically stable *Hauptsatz* could scarcely be greater.

At bar 251, the wandering becomes more agitated. Large right-hand arpeggios sweep across the keyboard like gale-force winds tossing the imagined vessel from side to side. The same, expansive breadth of range between the treble and bass; a physical expansiveness that once produced warmth, is transformed into danger. By bar 269, the music has weakened into a helpless, anxious, and breathless motive. The right-hand sixteenth-note figures are broken by rests, as though the speaker could no longer complete a sentence without gasping. Beginning in E-flat minor, the passage seems thoroughly disoriented, unable to determine where it should proceed. By bar 275, a degree of certainty is recovered in C minor. The character is more stable but also sterner and full of warning.

This stability eventually gives rise to an extended dominant preparation. The long passage from approximately bars 286 to 312 establishes heralds the return of the rondo theme through an enormous process of ebbing and rebuilding. The return of the principal theme is repeatedly implied but withheld. In Forkel's rhetorical terminology, this may be understood as *suspensio*: the listener is left suspended in expectation, conscious that a resolution is approaching but denied it for as long as possible.³⁹ The extraordinary length of the preparation enlarges the anticipated event. Each delay strengthens the listener's desire for the stability that the rondo theme represents.

When the rondo finally returns in bar 313, its magnificence feels fully earned. The theme appears *fortissimo*, but in an abridged form that omits the shy first version of the *Hauptsatz*. After the wandering and terror of the preceding episode, there can be no return to innocence. The movement resumes instead with the heroic, triumphant transformation of the theme, followed by the running sixteenth notes and trill. Home has been regained, but it is now understood as a victory. The final episode begins at bar 344 in a manner reminiscent of the first. This time, however, the triumphant energy of C major appears impossible to divert. It advances with enormous momentum, like a train driven forward by its own accumulated weight. The texture grows, the dynamic intensifies, and the movement seems destined for an immediate victorious conclusion.

The image displays a musical score for the final episode of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata, measures 340 through 352. The score is written for piano and consists of four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clef). Measure 340 features a trill in the right hand and a series of sixteenth notes in the left hand, marked with a forte (f) dynamic. Measure 344 begins a new section with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, marked 'sempre f'. Measure 348 continues this triplet pattern. Measure 352 concludes the section with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand, marked 'sempre più f'. The score includes various musical notations such as trills, triplets, and dynamic markings.

Musical Example 61. Final episode from the Rondo from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 114–16.

³⁹ See Chapter 8.12

365

368

369

370

371

372

373

374

375

376

cresc.

sempre ff

ff

116

379

381

ff

decresc.

pp

ppp

attacca subito il Prestissimo

At bar 369, another *abruptio* overturns this expectation through an unexpected modulation to G major. The listener, prepared for the continuation of the C-major triumph, is suddenly redirected. By bar 378, massive G-major chords begin to ascend, accumulating into a monumental structure. Then, an unexpected surprise derails everything. In bar 386, a dissonant diminished chord appears with horrifying suddenness. The gesture of the figure, recoiling in terror into a sudden inwardness, shielding himself from harm, parallels Engel's depiction in his *Ideen zu Mimik* below:



Figure 19. Expression of horror in Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (1785). *Erster Theil*, Fig. 24, 25.

The *exclamatio* is shocking, as though the ascending chords had risen too far and caused the collapse of the very tower they were constructing. Here, the orator recoils, shielding the body with the hands and hiding the face. This image helped me orient my imagination into this feeling when playing this section. Grandiose confidence gives way to physical weakness: trembling knees, broken speech, and chords interrupted by rests. In bars 394, 396, and 398, the fragmented rhythm resembles stammering. The speaker has lost the continuity of thought and gesture. The resulting affect is one of *dubitatio*, an

expression of indecision and uncertainty in which the orator visibly struggles to discover what should come next. However, at bar 400, a direction suddenly presents itself, like an idea flashing into the imagination. The dominant preparation for C major feels both like a discovery and a concealed joke. The music regains its purpose but does so with a coy smile or knowing wink, punctuated by the pearly G's played in different registers (bb. 340-42). Its mischievousness prepares the listener for a final surprise: the eruption of the *Prestissimo*.

The *Prestissimo* forms the final coda of the rondo, but it also functions as one last, extraordinary episode in which the movement's passions are carried beyond ordinary measure. Ecstasy, frenzy, rapture, and mania converge. John Walker observes that joy in excess borders upon folly and madness, and Beethoven's coda makes this proximity convincing.⁴⁰ Its speed, boldness, wit, and extravagant cheerfulness transform jubilation into something nearly delirious. The mind seems to race through a succession of ideas too rapidly to examine any one of them calmly. Fancy and imagination have been released from restraint.

The musical score for the *Prestissimo* section of Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata is presented in five systems. The first system (measures 408-410) features a treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature, and a bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The tempo is marked *Prestissimo* and the dynamics are *p dolce* and *f*. The second system (measures 411-413) continues the treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature, and the bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The third system (measures 414-416) includes a *cresc.* marking and a *f* dynamic. The fourth system (measures 417-419) continues the treble staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature, and the bass staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature. The fifth system (measures 420-422) features a *ff* dynamic. The score is written for piano and includes a *cresc.* marking and a *ff* marking.

Musical Example 62. *Prestissimo* from the Rondo from Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53. G. Henle Verlag, No. HN1034, 1976, p. 116–19.

⁴⁰ Walker, *Elements of Elocution*, vol. 2, p. 299.

424

p dolce

f

429

pp sempre

f *p*

435

ff

442

p

ff

(sf)

447

p

ff

p

452

pp

pp

457

pp

pp

ppp

462

pp

468

pp

473

pp *cresc.* *f*

478

decresc. *p* *cresc.*

484

tr *pp* *Red. 3*

490

tr *pp* *Red.*

This page of musical notation contains six systems of staves, each with a system number in a circle at the beginning. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, trills, and dynamics.

- System 495:** Features a treble staff with a trill (tr) and a bass staff with a piano (pp) dynamic. There are asterisks (*) and a "Ped." (pedal) instruction.
- System 501:** Continues the musical piece with a trill (tr) and a piano (pp) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).
- System 507:** Shows a trill (tr) and a crescendo (cresc.) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).
- System 515:** Features a forte (ff) dynamic, a piano (p) dynamic, and a crescendo (cresc.) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).
- System 522:** Continues the musical piece with a forte (ff) dynamic and a piano (p) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).
- System 528:** Features a forte (ff) dynamic and a decrescendo (decresc.) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).
- System 536:** Shows a piano (pp) dynamic, a forte (ff) dynamic, and a forte (f) dynamic. It includes a "Ped." instruction and an asterisk (*).

Czerny's metronome indication of a whole note at M.M. 80 demands a blistering tempo.⁴¹ I chose to accept this challenge because the resulting speed produces precisely the frenzy upon which the section's character depends. At a more cautious tempo, the passage may remain brilliant, but its sense of danger and rapture is diminished. Here, virtuosity must appear to strain against the boundaries of control.

The *Hauptsatz* is developed once again (bb. 403–05), now in a sort of diminution; a quicker, modified rhythmic setting with a flighty, jocular character. The coda then engages in a kind of technical brinkmanship, progressing through passages of increasing difficulty and brilliance. Simple accompaniment patterns give way to chromatic writing divided between the hands in thirds; these are followed by jumping and bounding octaves, daring arpeggios, trills, and the celebrated octave glissandi (bb. 464–75). The latter can be executed with greater ease and clarity on the Broadwood than on many modern pianos because of its lighter key weight and shallower key dip. The historical instrument therefore contributes not only a particular sonority but also a particular realm of physical possibility.

This accumulation of difficulties is not empty display. The multiplicity of textures embodies the ecstatic, near eccentric instability of the frenzied imagination. One idea is conceived, attempted, and immediately displaced by another; the mind seems determined to try everything at once. I must also make my imagination as flexible as Beethoven's when executing such passages, and my fingers just as nimble. The performer's virtuosity becomes the visible and audible sign of this imaginative excess. For the listener, the effect can itself become sublime: one witnesses the proliferation of ideas, the audacity of the writing, the daring of the performer, and the constant risk that the music may exceed the limits of execution.

To perform the passage at Czerny's tempo, I found it necessary to enter into something of this crazed imaginative state. The notation demands not merely accuracy but boldness—a willingness to risk, to leap, and to accept the possibility of extremity. Perhaps this differs from the polish and risk-averseness of many modern performances.⁴² I believe that the performer must not pretend that these difficulties are effortless in the sense of being emotionally inconsequential. Their apparent danger is part of what makes the passage exciting. The challenge is to transform physical brinkmanship into rhetorical meaning.

Around bar 515, after an extended and anxiety-inducing passage of intensive trills, the *Hauptsatz* bursts forth in its most triumphant and jubilant form, as a form of *epiphonema*. The theme that began with shyness and pastoral simplicity has struggled and proved resilient: survived doubt,

⁴¹ Noorduyn, 'Beethoven's Tempo Indications', p. 310.

⁴² See Chapter 4.4.2

anger, terror, exile, and collapse. It now returns as the victorious conclusion of the movement's argument.

The final majestic chords bring this jubilation to its grandiose close. This ending, though, proves more than a conventional affirmation of C major. It is the culmination of the sonata's entire emotional and rhetorical journey. The tranquillity of the opening has expanded into rapture; charm has become sublimity; simplicity has proved capable of containing an astonishing multiplicity of passions.

An audio recording of the performance of this sonata is available in the Supplement of this study.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined historical performance practices of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century keyboard music (1740–1830), reframed through contemporaneous accounts of classical rhetoric, embodied delivery, and the aesthetics of sensibility. Drawing on a wide range of period sources—musical treatises and theoretical writings, manuals on rhetorical acting and declamation, and aesthetic philosophy—this study has sought to reconstruct what “emotional expression” in music might have meant within the period’s own terms, centred on a rhetorical theory of communicable feeling grounded in inner experience.

Across the study, these materials are synthesized into a framework that articulates period ideals of musical performance and the assumptions that underwrite them. Moreover, this framework aimed to help clarify what musicians of the period may have meant when they spoke of “feeling,” “taste,” and good performance. To clarify how those assumptions operate in practice, the study developed the figures of the “feeling musician” and “rhetorical performer.” The study offered two main goals: firstly, a historically grounded model for how an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century musician might have operated; and secondly, prompts for present-day performers who wish to engage with this study’s vision of HIP.

Part I laid the conceptual groundwork by illustrating classical rhetoric as a period framework for the artistic process. The first chapter introduced rhetoric’s ancient roots as a performative art of persuasion through structured discourse and embodied delivery; an art that persisted (albeit in evolving forms) into the nineteenth century. It then established foundational definitions from classical rhetorical theory that would guide the rest of the study, including *telos*, *kairos*, and the commonplaces (*topoi*). Within this framework, music of the 1740–1830 period was examined as a species of musical oration: a mode of communication aiming, like spoken oratory, to move and convince listeners. The study argued that performance is not merely the faithful reproduction of a text, but an act of embodied delivery. Within this aesthetic paradigm, the study posited that music devoid of genuine affect—even if stylistically “correct”—risks losing its aesthetic impact. This opening thus established that the essential task of the performer is to link the internal and external: to transform inner feeling or emotional states into legible outward signs through the various “embodied” tools of the orator: tone, articulation, timing, and physicality, among others. The principal idea presented is that writers of the period advocate for a responsive coupling of inner feeling and its outward presentation—a fusion that classical rhetorical theory, both ancient and late Enlightenment-era, sought to systematically cultivate.

The study then turned in the second chapter to the intellectual climate of the late Enlightenment – the “age of sense and sensibility” – and outlined its key aesthetic concepts including “sensibility,” “sentiment,” and “sympathy.” Here, the Sublime was introduced as a central aesthetic aim of the period. It came to represent the specific *telos* of profound artistic works, including musical performances. This

challenges the model of “rational affectivity” proposed in various standard musicological accounts. Furthermore, a main concept in the aesthetic success of the Sublime was the merging of art and nature: a fusion that elevated expression beyond mere imitation. These principles were closely linked to the poetics of sensibility, which emphasized the careful sequencing of passions and the use of vivid descriptive detail and figures like *hypotyposis*.

The next chapter examined how various eighteenth-century thinkers conceptualized music as a sentimental “language:” one built from natural signs that could evoke emotional impressions in the listener. Rather than relying on arbitrary codes or symbolic representation, this musical language operated through signs that “painted” the voice’s bodily production of sound and the body’s internal and external movements, thereby stirring direct, emotional responses in listeners. Within this framework, the performer held a vital role in shaping and delivering these gestures convincingly. As such, the study argued that the performer’s task was not simply to execute notes, but to wield the “language of sentiments:” turning seemingly “abstract” musical materials into tangible, intersubjective feelings.

Following this, the dissertation explored classical *actio* or delivery in a chapter on “Rhetorical Delivery and Emotional Authenticity.” Here, the analysis highlighted period debates (exemplified by Denis Diderot’s *Paradoxe sur le comédien* and literary depictions such as Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*) over whether a convincing performance demands genuine emotion or skillful feigning. The thesis showed that the aesthetics of sensibility sought a middle ground: for writers like Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, the performer was expected to merge artifice with sincere sensibility—to be moved and thus move others, yet with technique always enhancing the passion. This is “Nature improved by art,” but carefully refined to avoid the affectation that results when artifice distorts the natural. In this model, termed “corporeal eloquence” by Lessing and others, the performer’s body was viewed as the medium through which emotion became legible. Aesthetic success depended on deliberate training of the body to cultivate an outward expressivity that was both aesthetically refined and reflexively responsive to genuine inner feeling. This was not considered to be mere mimicry, but an eloquence of the body that responds reflexively to a true inner movement, allowing outward expressive gestures to emerge naturally and convincingly—what this study refers to as “coupling.” This chapter also introduced key sentimental acting methods such as the “inside-out” and “outside-in” approaches, alongside Aaron Hill’s concept of the “Mazy Round”—a feedback loop in which sensibility can sustain and amplify inner emotional arousal, which in turn refines and deepens external expression. In addition, the study introduced the concept of emotional inertia and its connection to musical rubato: the natural effect an inside-out approach has on the timing of delivery as an orator transitions through different emotional states.

The final section of the chapter positioned historical rhetorical strategies in contrast to dominant contemporary performance ideologies. The dissertation offered a critique of *Regietheater* and certain (post)modern reinterpretations of historical works, arguing that such approaches often prioritize a narrow realism or disruption over emotional connection. As a result, they risk breaking the affective bond between performer and audience, substituting commentary for experience, and undermining the emotional sincerity that rhetorical strategies were designed to support. Turning to music, the study identified two dominant contemporary interpretive tendencies in both the early music revival and mainstream classical performance. On the one hand was the text-literalist approach; on the other, the brilliant, virtuosic approach. The rhetorical approach proposed in this study again offers a challenge. The study argued that in both the literalist and virtuosic models, “coupling” is disrupted: the former suppresses the performer’s interiority in favour of “objective” fidelity, while the latter substitutes the external appearance of passion for real passion itself. By contrast, the rhetorical approach values personally authentic feeling shaped by cultivated technique, restoring the balance between intention, embodiment, and communication. In this way, arguably, a return to rhetorical strategies holds the potential to reinvigorate the musical performance landscape.

The following chapter, “Genius, Imagination, and Taste,” examined how eighteenth-century theorists conceptualized creativity. Central to this discussion was Alexander Gerard’s 1774 account of genius, which served as a cornerstone for understanding artistic invention within the sentimental-rhetorical paradigm. For Gerard, genius was the regulated interplay of sensibility, imagination, judgement, and taste. The true artistic genius, in Gerard’s model, is not the unbounded innovator, or the producer of idiosyncratic enigmas, but an artist who contributes meaningfully to shaping expression that is both original and communicatively powerful. Here, imagination supplies a multiplicity of ideas through the transformation of materials acquired by the senses and stored in the memory, while judgement and taste regulate. In rhetorical delivery, this means having a taste that responds to *telos* and *kairos*. The period conception of taste ensures that what the imagination produces is fitting and coherent. The study then examined the components of taste from Gerard’s model: sensibility, refinement, correctness, and the union of all three. This model of taste was used as an argument to reframe the way pedagogical treatises are often interpreted in HIP. Rather than reinforcing an objective bias through collecting external “period markers,” the section argued that HIP should shift to cultivating taste. Read this way, rules, drills, and even dense notation are not anti-expressive constraints but rhetorical prompts that enable expressive freedom.

Finally, Part I culminated in a reflection on “Sympathetic Interpretation,” exploring period theories of interpretation. In this model, the score itself is not a complete expression but a residue of the composer’s sensibility, in need of rhetorical activation. To interpret sympathetically is to reconstruct an “impression” of feeling from the traces left behind in the artefact, and to flexibly reshape it through the performer’s own genius (in Gerard’s terms) in rhetorical delivery so that it can once again speak in the

present. This approach again rejects the flattening of interpretation arguably found in text-literalist models, all the while insisting that interpretation should be responsive to *telos* and *kairos*.

Part II moved from establishing the rhetorical framework to applying it as an analytical and interpretive method. It sought to read repertory from 1740–1830 through historically grounded rhetorical tools—disposition, rhetorical grammar, form, and figures—and aimed to show how musical materials were understood as ordered discourse and how these principles could also inform delivery for a performer. This approach sought to both enhance musicological structural description and illuminate interpretive premises that can be productively taken up by modern performers. The first chapter in this part investigated how classical principles of *dispositio* apply to musical form and phrasing. Through analysis of period sources and musical examples, it illustrated how composers structured their works into “musical discourses:” from the concatenation of small-scale musical “sentences” to the ordering of large-scale sections in movement-length forms. In this view, the dissertation argued that viewing a work as a kind of argument encourages the performer to clarify its logical-emotional narrative. The second chapter of Part II complemented these structural considerations by cataloguing some of the expressive devices available to a musical orator. Here, numerous musical-rhetorical figures were identified, and explanations were given on how they function rhetorically in delivery. The analysis linked each figure to performance practice and gave illustrative artistic research examples.

Finally, Part III presented four artistic research case studies that put the dissertation’s rhetorical approach into artistic practice, yielding experiential insights. The first two case studies in declamation and historical acting of poetry constituted a method for the author’s training of embodied rhetorical delivery. They aimed to recondition the author’s expressive instincts, so that eventual musical performance could be shaped from within by analogous principles. The author sought to use declamation and rhetorical acting to prepare his imagination and body to recognize and respond to emotional content in a natural and reflexive manner. In this way, the author aimed to cultivate his own sensibility to become more responsive to the “Mazy Round,” feeding imagination with more materials to manipulate, and developing a better understanding of how to use taste to regulate what was produced. This was in service of training corporeal eloquence—to cultivate a reflexive response in which expressive action is no longer externally imposed but arises from an embodied familiarity with the aesthetic forms of feeling.

The next two case studies shifted again to music, beginning with musical analysis. The first of these case studies sought to further illustrate the rhetorical approach through an eighteenth-century authority’s eyes. It revisited Forkel’s 1783 essay on C.P.E. Bach’s Sonata in F minor, Wq 57/6, which reads the sonata as a sentimental journey crafted with rhetorical logic. The analysis highlighted Forkel’s insistence on coherence: each musical idea should flow from the previous in a purposeful emotional sequence, lest the whole piece degenerate into incoherence. By explicating Forkel’s rhetorical

interpretation of C. P. E. Bach, the dissertation further argued that the rhetorical approach was organically understood by period musicians themselves.

The final case study was performance-based: an artistic interpretation of Beethoven's *Waldstein* Sonata (No. 21 Op. 53, first movement) that served as a capstone for the dissertation's principles. Here, I stepped fully into the role of musical orator, applying the rhetorical framework to one of the era's iconic keyboard works. The *Waldstein* was approached as a dramatic emotional narrative, carrying performer and listener through a succession of passions. The study reports how every aspect of the interpretation was informed by rhetorical considerations including the choice of fortepiano, the structural sequencing of the various passions, the identification of rhetorical figures, and the integration of these principles through a responsive, embodied rhetorical delivery. Throughout the rendition, there was an emphasis on embodying Beethoven's extremes of dynamics and passagework as a real experience of the Sublime: the playing aimed to evoke daring, risk, awe, and excitement (in Edmund Burke's sense) while never losing the thread of the emotional throughline. This case study thus sought to show that a performer equipped with the rhetorical approach might unlock a fresh perspective even in well-known repertoire. By seeking to engage an audience's imagination and emotions with both fiery spontaneity and clear narrative direction, the author sought to demonstrate the tangible, applied artistic and aesthetic impact of the research.

Reflections and Impact: Transforming HIP

One of the key takeaways of this research is a proposed reconceptualization of HIP that foregrounds embodied delivery through *telos* and *kairos*. In this vision, seeking to move listeners through *pathos* becomes the chief governing consideration for the performer. In this way, this study challenged several modern assumptions that often pervade modern expressive ideologies in music, including those that equate "historical authenticity" solely with surface-details and text-literalism, and others that equate *pathos* with overwrought brilliance and virtuosity. Instead, this study sought to reveal a historical aesthetic paradigm of sensibility that prioritized personal emotional authenticity, imaginative flexibility, nuanced refinement, and audience engagement. This new vision insists that fidelity to history includes fidelity to affective impact: to perform Mozart, Haydn, C.P.E. Bach, or Beethoven as their contemporaries envisaged is to prioritize moving the audience. Exploring and integrating rhetorical strategies and corporeal eloquence into performance arguably would strengthen this aim. By restoring such aesthetic principles to the forefront, HIP can arguably become not only an educational or antiquarian endeavor, but a relevant, sublime artistic experience for present-day audiences.

Building on that vision, the study advances a revised model of HIP, and more generally, of the artistic creative process for musicians. This model draws inspiration from late Enlightenment artistic psychology, particularly the interplay of imagination, sensibility, judgement, and taste. In practice, this means the performer is understood as an active, creative agent – a modern counterpart of the period's

ideal “genius” who invents and infuses personal insight into execution, rather than a neutral executor of a written score. Crucially, this creative freedom is not arbitrary or idiosyncratic: it is guided by judgement and taste cultivated through historically inspired corporeal eloquence. In this light, historical pedagogical materials in music and elocution could be reframed as instruments for training this regulated imagination. Such insights could transform the methodology and pedagogy of HIP, which arguably sometimes prioritized the mechanical or external over the personal and affective.

Most importantly, this study sought to extend the way HIP performers engage with the notion of fidelity, advancing a “historically inspired performance.” Through sympathetic interpretation, the performer aims to become more than a technician or stylistic imitator. Rather, the goal is to become an embodied continuation of the composer’s expressive project, guided by the same principles of rhetorical invention and sensibility that shaped the music in the first place. Accordingly, modern performers could remain historically informed – studying treatises, letters, and scores to understand the idioms of the time – while also allowing latitude to their personal artistic voice. This is arguably a more historically faithful model for interpretation, advanced by many period writers. In doing so, the performer would be faithful to the work’s intended *telos* in a way that resonates most strongly here and now (*kairos*). A rhetorical, embodied approach in this vision of HIP does not discard the score or historical evidence; rather, it seeks to treat them as a prompt for oration, to be brought to life by the performer’s own genius. In sum, the revised conception of HIP proposed here is one in which historical understanding and personal creativity cooperate. It seeks to present the HIP musician as an eloquent storyteller and emotional conduit who, inspired by the past, speaks to the present. This approach arguably promises performances that are both faithful and fresh – faithful to the affective and rhetorical intentions of the music, and fresh in their immediacy and human connection.

Future Research

While this study has been largely historical, theoretical, and artistic in its approach, one important direction for future research is to empirically test the embodied rhetorical performance model put forth here. If a performance guided by embodied rhetorical principles yields a more powerful aesthetic impact (for example, a greater sense of sublimity or emotional engagement in the listener), it would be illuminating to investigate this in practice. Future studies could employ methods from psychology and neuroscience to measure the effects of this approach to performance on both audiences and performers. For instance, researchers might design experiments where musicians perform a piece in three styles: one following a conventional text-literalist approach, a modern virtuosic approach, and another using the expressive, rhetoric-driven approach advocated in this study. Audience responses could be gauged through surveys of emotional reception and physiological measures to detect heightened arousal or emotional resonance. Likewise, performers’ own experiences could be monitored – do they feel more connected and expressive, do their stress levels differ, does their expressive intent register in measurable

ways? Such empirical data would help assess the real-world impact of the embodied rhetorical approach. It would also bridge the gap between qualitative artistic insight and scientific understanding of music cognition. By testing the principles in live or simulated performance settings, scholars can move toward a more evidence-based affirmation of this model's value. This interdisciplinary engagement – between musicology, performance studies, empirical aesthetics, psychology, and neuroscience – could validate the centuries-old rhetorical wisdom (from Cicero to Beethoven) in contemporary terms. Furthermore, empirical research might refine the approach by pinpointing which elements of rhetorical performance most significantly enhance audience engagement, giving performers tools to calibrate and optimize their expressive impact.

A second high-level avenue for future inquiry is to extend the embodied rhetorical model beyond the specific repertoire and era of this study. While this dissertation focused on keyboard music c.1740–1830, the underlying principles of rhetorical performance can be applied and explored in many other musical domains. One obvious extension is to other instruments and ensembles. For example, would an orchestra playing early Romantic symphonies benefit from a conscious application of coordinated embodied emotional action? Investigating these questions could involve both analytical research and practical experimentation with ensembles. Additionally, the timeframe could be expanded earlier and later. For music pre-1740, researchers could further integrate the well-documented Baroque “doctrine” of figures and Affections with the embodied delivery perspective. Conversely, one might explore how elements of rhetorical performance persisted or transformed in the later nineteenth century and beyond.

Another notable expansion of this research lies in the theatrical and vocal genres where music and verbal rhetoric naturally meet. Opera, oratorio, melodrama, and spoken theatre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were multimedia arts that united text, music, visual arts, and physical expression into a single persuasive address. Future research could therefore apply the dissertation's core claim about communicable feeling to repertoires that were beyond the present study's scope but share its conceptual territory. In historically informed opera performance, for example, singers and directors could draw on embodied delivery techniques from sources such as Austin's *Chironomia* (1806) and Walker's elocutionary pedagogy to stage operas in a way that aims to strengthen the dramatic impact of musical expression with rhetorical gesture and declamation. The question would not simply be how to “add baroque gesture,” but how to cultivate a performer's corporeal eloquence so that all of the elements of their outward expression: gesture, attitude, gaze, costume, vocal colouring, and timing, sublimely function together in union. What might a Mozart *opera seria* become if every vocal inflection, orchestral cue, and stage action were treated as a unified part of an orator's delivery? Similarly, melodrama—where spoken text is accompanied by music—presents an especially fertile testing ground for reconstructing historical acting techniques, because it makes the alliance between rhetorical declamation and musical painting explicit. Such interdisciplinary performance research, bringing

together musicians, actors, stage directors, and scholars, would test the versatility of the rhetorical model while offering a concrete laboratory for practice-led inquiry.

Crucially, however, this expansion is not only about historical “accuracy.” It is also about expressive agency. Arguably, one of the most significant implications of this study’s proposed model for rhetorical pedagogy is that it could equip performers with tools for creativity—for making choices that are personal yet publicly communicable and historically faithful. In contemporary operatic practice, this has the potential to challenge two different kinds of potential rigidity that can flatten expression: on the one hand, forms of *Regietheater* direction that tightly prescribe stage “business” and leave little room for individual interpretive input; on the other, historically oriented staging practices that treat “baroque gesture” as a fixed choreography to be executed rather than an eloquent vocabulary to be inhabited. In the view of this study’s framework, both approaches arguably could yield a certain stiffness—not because performers lack feeling, but because the coupling between inner feeling and outward sign has been overruled by external instructions to be followed. If singers and actors were empowered with the rhetorical agency offered by the sources, they could arguably possess a richer toolkit for engaging personally with text, drama, and (most importantly) the sentiments they are tasked to express. Instead of rigidly following directions and transparently executing the interpretive will of another, performers could generate their own solutions—choices that arise from their own sympathetic interpretation of the text. This model follows more faithfully the flexible and sometimes chaotic nature of eighteenth-century theatre. In this way, this vision for rhetorical training does not merely “decorate” performance with period-appropriate gestures; it aims to restore the performer as an eloquent creative agent who pursues the Sublime.

Appendix: Collected Examples of Common Musical Commonplaces

Table 6. Mattheson's topoi associated with different passions. Excerpted from *Der vollkommene Capellmeister* (1739).

Passion	Explanation
Joy	“Joy is an expansion of our soul, thus it follows reasonably and naturally that I could best express this affect by large and expounded intervals.” (I:3:56)
Sadness	“Sadness is a contraction of those subtle parts of our body, then it is easy to see that the small and smallest intervals are the most suitable for this passion.” (I:3:57) “Despair is the furthest extent to which cruel fear can drive us; thus it is easy to see that this passion can lead us in sounds, in order to express it naturally, to curious <i>Extremitae</i> of all sorts, indeed to the most extreme, and hence can bring about unusual passages and strange, mad, disordered sequences of notes.” (I:3:80)
Love	“Love is in fact essentially a diffusion of the spirits, then we will rightly conform to this in composing, and use similar relationships of sounds (<i>intervalis n. diffusis & luxuriantibus</i>).” (I:3:58)
Hope	“Hope is the elevation of the soul or spirits; but despair is a depression of this: all of which are things which can very naturally be represented with sound, especially when the other circumstances (tempo in particular) contribute their part.” (I:3:58) “Hope is a pleasant and soothing thing: it consists of joyful longing which fills the spirit with a certain courage. Hence, this affect demands the loveliest use of the voice and the sweetest combination of sounds in the world, for which courageous longing serves as a spur as it were; yet so that even though the joy is only moderate, courage nevertheless enlivens and animates everything, which yields the best combination and uniting of sounds in composition.” (I:3:77)
Lust	“Lust cannot in fact be separated from love, but the difference between the two is that the latter is concerned with the present, but the former looks to the future and as a rule is intrinsically more violent and impatient. All yearning, all longing, wishing, striving and craving, whether tempered or violent, belongs here, and one must also invent and arrange one’s music according to their complex character, as well as with regard to the natural quality of that which one craves and wishes.” (I:3:65)
Pride	“Pride, haughtiness, arrogance, and the like, are also usually depicted or expressed with their special colors in notes and sounds, for which purpose the composer usually draws upon a bold, pompous style. He thus has the opportunity to use all sorts of majestic musical figures which require a special seriousness and grandiloquent motion; but he must never permit a musical line that is fleeting and falling, but always ascending.” (I:3:72)

Humility	“The opposite of these emotions is humility, patience, etc., which must be dealt with in music with a humble style, and indeed there must be nothing elevating.” (I:3:73)
Stubbornness	“Stubbornness deserves a special place among the affects that are appropriate to” musical rhetoric and helpful in inventions, which can be represented by means of so-called capricci, or peculiar notions, namely when one writes such peculiar passages in one or another voice which one is resolved not to change cost what it may.” (I:3:74)
Anger	“Anger, ardor, vengeance, rage, fury, and all other such violent affections, are actually far better at making available all sorts of musical inventions than the gentle and pleasant passions which are handled with much more refinement. Yet it is also not enough with the former if one only rumbles along strongly, makes a lot of noise and boldly rages: notes with many tails will simply not suffice, as many think; but each of these violent qualities requires its own particular characteristics, and, despite forceful expression, must still have a becoming singing quality: as our general principle, which we must not lose sight of, expressly demands.” (I:3:75)
Jealousy	“because this emotional state is a combination of seven other passions, led by ardent love, but including mistrust, desire, revenge, sadness, fear and shame; thus one can easily see that numerous musical inventions can be derived therefrom, all of which however, according to their nature, must aim in the end at something of the restless, vexatious, angry and distressing.” (I:3:76)
Fear	“Fright and horror also belong here, which, if one thinks of them rightly and has a good mental picture of their natural character, yield very suitable musical passages corresponding with the condition of the affections.” (I:3:78) “The business of music, though it should mainly strive to be charming and pleasing, still serves occasionally with its dissonances or harsh passages to some measure and with suitable instruments to present not only something of the unpleasant and disagreeable, but also something of the frightening and horrible: as the spirit even occasionally derives some peculiar sort of comfort from these.” (I:3:79)
Pity	“Pity, which requires no small scholarship in music, because it is composed of two main affects, namely love and sadness, one of which would quite suffice for us to employ our pitches most movingly.” (I:3:81)
Tranquility	“Whether composure may constitute an emotion seems somewhat doubtful to me: for a calm and quiet heart is rather free of all unusual emotions is still and content. Because this state has its special characteristics, and can best be represented naturally by means of a soft unison passage; thus a musician really has to observe and do various things with it: although he must not give it first place, call it what you will, at least he should not always give it last place in the natural theory of sound: though it would not mind (out of composure) taking it.” (I:3:82)

Table 7. Various key-affect systems for common keys.⁴³

Key	Johann Mattheson (Hamburg)	Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Paris, 1768)	Georg Joseph Vogler (Mannheim during 1778–79)	C.F.D. Schubart (Württemberg, writings c. 1770–80s; first ed. 1806)	Francesco Galeazzi (Turin 1796)	William Gardner (London 1817)
C-major	“Most common of all. But even this trivial key can be made to sound somewhat tender and touching” (1719)		“Splendid” (1778)	“Completely pure. Its character is innocence, simplicity, naivety, children’s talk”	“Grandiose, military, fit for display, grand events, serious, majestic, and tumultuous.”	“Bold, vigorous, and commanding; suited to the expression of war and enterprise.”
c-minor	“An extremely lovely, but also sad key” (1713)	“Brings tenderness into the soul”		“Declaration of love and at the same time, the lament of unhappy love. All languishing, longing, singing of the lovesick”	“A tragic key fit to express grand misadventures, deaths of heroes, and grand, but mournful, ominous, and lugubrious actions”	“Complaining, having something of the whining cant of b-minor.”
D-major	“Somewhat shrill and stubborn, it is best suited to noisy, joyful, warlike and rousing things. But at the same time, no one will deny that when a flute is used instead of a trumpet and a violin is used instead of a kettledrum, even this hard key can give a special disposition to delicate things.” (1713)	“Gaiety, brilliance”	“Lively” (1778)	“The key of triumph, of Hallelujah, of war cries of victory rejoicing. Thus the inviting symphonies, marches, holiday songs, and heaven-rejoicing choruses are in this key.”	“The most cheerful and gay key that music has; it is tumultuous to an extreme degree and is fit to express feasts, weddings, merry-making, jublations, exultations, eulogies, etc.”	“Ample, grand, and noble. Having more fire than C, it is suited to the loftiest purposes. In choral music, it is the highest key”
d-minor	“Somewhat devout, calm; also somewhat grand, pleasant and expressive of contentment; therefore, it is capable of promoting devotion in church.” (1713)			“Dejected womanhood which broods notions and illusions.”	“Extremely melancholy and gloomy; it is little used outside of modulations”	“Possess the same qualities [as F major, rich, mild, sober, and contemplative] but of a heavier and darker cast, more doubtful, solemn and grand.”
E flat major	“Beautiful, majestic, and honest” (1719)		“Dark” (1778) “Night” (1779)	“The key of love and devotion, of intimate conversation with God; through its three flats it expresses the holy trinity.”	“Heroic, extremely majestic, grave, and serious; superior to C-major”	“Full and mellow, sombre, soft, and beautiful. It is a key in which all musicians delight – though less decided in character than

⁴³ Excerpted from Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 1996), app. A, pp. 225–98.

						some of the others, the regularity of its beauty renders it a universal favorite."
e-minor	"very pensive, grieved, and sad, though in such a way that there is still hope for consolation."			"Naive, womanly, innocent declaration of love, lament without murmuring, sighs accompanied by few tears. This key speaks of impending hope of the purest happiness calling forth in C major. Since by nature it has only one color, one could compare it with a girl, dressed in white, with a rose-red bow on her bosom. One withdraws from this tone with inexpressible grace again to the fundamental C major, where heart and ear find the most perfect satisfaction.	"Almost banished from music of good taste, save for modulations"	"Persuasive, soft and tender."
F-major	"Capable of expressing the most beautiful sentiments in the world, whether there be generosity, steadfastness, love, or whatever else stands high on the list of virtues." (1713)	"Majestic"	"Silent, lonely" (1778) "Dead, calm" (1779)	"Complaisance and calm"	"Majestic, but less so than E flat or C major; it is too shrill but not piercing."	"Rich, mild, sober, and contemplative."
f-minor	"Appears to be mild and calm, yet at the same time deep and heavy with despair. It represents a fatal anxiety and is exceedingly moving. It expresses beautifully a bleak, helpless melancholy, and sometimes causes the listener to shudder with horror." (1713)	"Reaches towards lugubriousness and despair"		"Deep depression, funeral lament, groans of misery and longing for the grave."	"Most fit to express varying degrees of sorrow, anguish, violent transports, agitation, etc."	"Religious, penitential, and gloomy"

G-major	“Possesses much that is insinuating and persuasive; moreover, it is quite brilliant, and suitable both to serious and to cheerful songs” (1713)		“Already livelier [than C major], although not stormy. Naive actions especially of innocent rustic pleasures, can be expressed more simply here than in other keys.” (1779)	“Everything rustic, idyllic, and lyrical, every calm and satisfied passion, every tender gratitude for the friendship and faithful love; in a word, every gentle and peaceful emotion of the heart is correctly expressed by this key.”	“Innocent, simple, unemotional, indifferent, and of little effect.”	“Gay and sprightly. Being the medium key, it is adapted to the greatest range of subjects.”
g-minor	“Almost the most beautiful key, because it not only combines the more serious quality of the previous key [d-minor] with spirited loveliness, but also brings in an uncommon grace and kindness. Therefore, it is fitting for tender as well as for refreshing things, for longing as well as for happy ones. [...] it is suitable and thoroughly flexible to both moderate plaintiveness and tempered cheerfulness.” (1713)			“Discontent, uneasiness, worry about a fabled scheme, bad-tempered gnarling of teeth; in a word, resentment and dislike.”	“Almost the same character as c-minor, but a little less grandiose. It is suited to frenzy, despair, agitation, etc.”	“Meek and pensive. Respite with melancholy.”
A-flat major			“Plutopian realm” (1779) “Gentle night key. It is still blacker [than E flat major] milder; an affable key.” (1812)	“The key of the grave. Death, grave, putrefaction, judgement, eternity lie in its radius.”	“Not used much on account of its difficulty. It is a gloomy key: low, deep, fit to express horror, the silence of night, stillness, fear, terror.”	“The most lovely of the tribe. Unassuming, gentle, soft, delicate, and tender. [...] reserved for the expression of the most refined sentiments.”
A-major	“It is very gripping, although at the same time more brilliant, and is more suited to lamenting and more sad passions than to <i>divertissements</i>.” (1713) “Playful and jesting” (1719)	“Gaiety or brilliance.”	“Still sharper [than D major] but it cannot serve for stormy matters as does D. The fire of an amorous and tender passion is more happily depicted hereby than that of a rash one.”	“Declarations of innocent love, satisfaction with one’s state of affair; hope of seeing one’s beloved again when parting; youthful cheerfulness and trust in God.”	“Totally harmonious, expressive, affectionate, playful, laughing and cheerful.”	“Golden, warm and sunny.”

a-minor	“Somewhat plaintive, honourable and calm. It invites sleep, but is not on that count unpleasant.” (1713)			“Pious womanliness and tenderness of character.”	“Extremely lugubrious and gloomy. It is little practiced: if so, it expresses slaughters, massacres, and funeral dirges.”	“Plaintive, but not feeble”
B-flat major	“Very diverting and sumptuous’ yet, it is also somewhat modest, and thus can pass as both magnificent and dainty.”	“Tragic”	“Twilight” (1779)	“Cheerful love, clear confidence, hope, aspiration for a better world.”	“Tender, soft, sweet, effeminate, fit to express transports of love, charm and grace.”	“The least interesting of any: it has not sufficient fire to render it majestic or grand, and it is too dull for song.”
b-minor	“Bizarre, morose, and melancholy. Because of this, it is seldom used.”			“This is as it were, the key of patience, or calm awaiting one’s fate and of submission to the divine dispensation. For that reason, its lament is so mild, without ever breaking out into offensive murmuring or whimpering.”	“Banished from music of good taste.”	“Bewailing, but in too high a tone to excite commiseration.”

Supplement: Audio-Visual Materials

Audio and video materials from the case studies are presented below:

Thomas Gray – *Elegy in a Country Church Courtyard* (1750) from Case Study 2

- Version according to Gilbert Austin 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=scxxIbiVUXM>
- Version according to Gilbert Austin 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yf3-yJf4QmM>

Edward Young – *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts* (1742–45) from Case Study 2

- Version according to Gilbert Austin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hyEMkvNo5Ak>
- Historically inspired version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YeN4N2SY7fc>

Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach – Sonata in f minor, Wq 57/6 from Case Study 3

Anders Muskens, Utrecht Early Music Festival ©2022

<https://emtv.online/catalogus-alles/fomu-2022/202217-anders-muskens-bach-3/>

Ludwig van Beethoven – *Waldstein* Sonata in C major, No. 21 Op. 53 from Case Study 4

The audio recording is available on the album: *Beethoven: Waldstein & Appassionata Sonatas*, Leaf Music (2023) <https://leaf-music.lnk.to/am003>

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