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*THE VIENNESE MINOR-KEY SYMPHONY IN THE AGE OF HAYDN AND MOZART*

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To write a minor-key symphony in the eighteenth century was undoubtedly a ‘marked’ strategic choice, owing to the comparatively low frequency with which it occurred. Notwithstanding their overall rarity, minor-key symphonies constitute a ‘second-level default’ in Hepokoski and Darcy’s sense, producing their own set of conventions, strategies and even ‘deformations’ (James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10–11). It is the ‘negative’ quality, the sense of denial generally associated with the minor key, that is said to be responsible for the highly expressive and deeply emotional connotations ascribed to these symphonies, as testified by canonic examples such as Mozart’s Symphony in G minor K550, or Haydn’s much earlier Symphony in F sharp minor, No. 45 (‘Farewell’).

Nevertheless, recent scholarship has largely abandoned the romantic view that these works served the purpose of self-expression on the part of the composer, or were indicative of a personal or musical (and particularly Austrian) crisis. It may also be regarded as a commonplace of modern music historiography to understand these works as part of a much broader tradition pursued at a number of European centres (Mannheim and Vienna, for example) – a tradition, incidentally, that does not have anything in common with the literary movement known as ‘Sturm und Drang’. (If its usefulness persists at all in music, this label may function at best as a stylistic category.) It remains surprising, however, given the undeniable historical importance of minor-key symphonies and their obvious appeal to modern listeners, that there has been no book-length study devoted to this subject – a lacuna that is now admirably filled by Matthew Riley’s monograph, impressive as it is both in its scope and its level of methodological sophistication.

For Riley, the minor-key symphony is a subgenre in its own right, made up of a flexible cluster of features (or strategies) that include a ‘mediant tutti’ (Riley’s term for the common strategy of a sudden and pivotal turn to the relative major following the half cadence that concludes the primary theme in a minor-key sonata exposition; see pages 12–24), ‘untimely rhetoric’, operatic gestures, the contrapuntal minuet and the stormy finale, the latter two ‘subgeneric conventions’ being thoroughly studied in chapter 4. Unlike earlier commentators such as Jens Peter Larsen or H. C. Robbins Landon, who tended to mention composers like Gassmann and Wanhal (and others) in one breath, Riley carefully distinguishes between composers working inside and outside the imperial court. Based on this distinction, he even goes so far as to discern two (sometimes overlapping) types of the subgenre. Thus in a second chapter devoted to minor-key symphonies in the imperial court style (Wagenseil, Gassmann and Ordonez) we learn that such works often lack both the stormy manner and the ‘mediant tutti’, but are replete with what Riley aptly calls ‘untimely rhetoric’, a ‘strategy that evokes unfashionable idioms preserved from before the triumph of “galant” style and aesthetics’ (269; examples include fugato, canon, ritornello gestures and fast-moving bass lines). Wagenseil’s use of ‘untimely rhetoric’, intended to satisfy the emperor’s backward-looking, esoteric predilection for pathos and counterpoint, is especially striking considering the composer’s otherwise strong advocacy of the (homophonic, easily accessible) galant style in his major-key works. Although Riley considers the findings presented in chapter 2 to be of merit in themselves, the explicit purpose of this chapter is largely preliminary, as the court style was not so much important in its own right as it was a constant point of reference for subsequent contributions to the subgenre. The allusions to the court style in Haydn’s and Mozart’s minor-key works in particular make it necessary ‘to understand this repertory in order to envisage the horizon of expectations against which those pieces unfold and to decode their meaning’ (39–40).



Taking the Viennese imperial court as a point of departure, then, the book works its way through the repertoire of symphonies from outside the imperial court, in particular those written by Wanhal (chapters 3 and 6), Joseph Haydn (chapters 5 and 7) and Mozart (chapter 8). Apart from Haydn and Mozart, one of the most important composers belonging to the group outside the court was Johann Baptist Wanhal. Owing to this composer's extensive and manifold contribution to the minor-key symphony, Riley devotes two chapters to his compositional output, revealing, among many other interesting details, significant intertextual relationships between Wanhal's symphonies and the earliest minor-key symphony by Joseph Haydn, No. 39 in G minor (1765).

Although the primary aim of this book is to reconstruct the development of the minor-key symphony in the Habsburg territory, its merits are not solely 'archaeological'; Riley's methods also allow him to cast new light upon familiar canonic works such as Mozart's two symphonies in G minor, K183 and K550, by putting them into their proper historical context. His discussion of K183 and K550 in the final chapter 8 may rightfully be seen as the climax of the whole book (and indeed no general conclusion follows this chapter); it is here that the author reaps the fruits of his previous chapters' labour. As for K183, Riley largely follows A. Peter Brown's argument against the traditional view of this work (in addition to the six string quartets K168–173) as the result of Mozart's acquaintance with Haydn's minor-key symphonies, in particular his No. 39 (Brown, *The Symphonic Repertoire, Volume II: The First Golden Age of the Viennese Symphony: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 372–373). However, drawing on his findings from chapter 2, Riley is able to refine Brown's argument that this 'little' G minor symphony is in fact indicative of Mozart's attempt to enhance his chances of finding employment at the Viennese court. That Mozart adopts the 'untimely' stylistic markers favoured by court composers alongside the advanced strategies typically used outside the court (mediant tutti, buffa-style subordinate theme and other operatic topics) makes this work appear somewhat paradoxical in nature.

Riley's intertextual approach also enables him to provide a fresh analysis of the late G minor symphony, which still represents something of a mystery even after more than a century of intensive analytical and historical engagement (among other puzzles is the occasion for which Mozart may have written this piece – as is also the case with the other two grand symphonies, K543 and K551). Owing to the familiarity of K550, past scholars have tended to exaggerate the normativity of certain of its traits, in particular the presence of the 'mediant tutti' and the contrapuntal minuet, both of which, Riley argues, in fact represent the deliberate revival of an older tradition. To reveal Mozart's originality all the more clearly, other minor-key works written around 1788, such as Leopold Kozeluch's Symphony in G minor P1:5 (1787), are brought in essentially to act as a backdrop. Although it is laudable that the book does not restrict its scope to the great masters, but – in order to paint a rich and vivid historical picture – considers a number of the largely neglected 'minor' composers, one comes away with the impression that the primary purpose of studying the *Kleinmeister* is to emphasize the distance between them and the 'masters'. Compared to Mozart, who seems to aim at reformulating tradition, Kozeluch's allusions to the older style are interpreted as being at times 'unsubtle', 'surprising' and even mere 'application[s] of old rules' (259). These qualifications and the value judgments they endorse are intuitively understandable, yet it is difficult to see why Kozeluch's symphony is not a work of high aesthetic value too. For instance, the passage starting in bar 13 with 'the very conspicuous Corelli leapfrog pattern . . . with imitative entries' (257) plays with the listener's expectations in an intriguing manner, since it may be understood as 'a second attempt at a main theme at a point when a mediant tutti would have been expected' (257). Furthermore, the omission of the mediant tutti in the recapitulations of both the opening movement and the finale (in the latter it was closely mapped onto the primary theme) is another noteworthy feature of Kozeluch's symphony, as is the lack of a minuet (the latter being a 'marked' choice given the composer's strong preference for the four-movement design in his major-key symphonies).

In addition to a more sympathetic analysis of Kozeluch's work, one may also have hoped to find a discussion of another important figure in the history of the symphony, namely Antonio Rosetti, whose symphonies were widely known and performed alongside Haydn's in both Paris and London in the 1780s and early 1790s. Although Rosetti is excluded from the corpus because he worked at the southern German court of



Oettingen-Wallerstein and not in Vienna, he too wrote a G minor symphony (A42) in 1787, one year before Mozart composed his K550. It is not unlikely that Mozart knew both works, Kozeluch's and Rosetti's, and this familiarity may have provided an even greater incentive to compose a G minor symphony of his own. Rosetti's only symphony in a minor key is particularly interesting as it anticipates Mozart's remarkable choice to restate the mediant tutti in the recapitulation not in the minor key, as was conventional, but in the major, before reverting to the minor later on; Mozart deviates from his possible model in Rosetti's work only in the choice of key (VI as opposed to I).

Haydn's minor-mode practice too acts a point of comparison. Unlike Haydn, whose minor-key symphonies of the 1780s feature 'modal reversion' (either within a movement or between the first movement and the finale) to the tonic major, Mozart, by retaining the minor mode, realizes a truly tragic plot. That Mozart is presented as the exploiter of tradition and hence placed in opposition to Haydn the problem-solver may be legitimate in general, but not necessarily with regard to K550. One may indeed think of the very opening of the first movement as representing a problem that requires adjustments later on. In choosing to end his development section by sustaining the retransitional dominant into the (melodic) recapitulation and hence blurring a moment of form-functional significance, Mozart seems to respond to the unusual opening (soft beginning, with apparently accompanimental figures deferring the first strong accent until bar 3) in a manner similar to what Haydn does in the first movement of his String Quartet in C major Op. 33 No. 3.

It is an admirable aspect of the book that its author is explicit about virtually every decision being made, including the choice of repertoire (see the very useful introductory chapter). The book considers over fifty symphonies, by at least eleven composers who were based either in Vienna or in the surrounding Habsburg territories. Although it is quite easy for a reviewer to criticize the delineation of any repertoire – one could at any point call for an expansion – Riley's restriction raises critical questions about the unity of the repertoire being studied: given the fact that 'music and musicians moved freely and rapidly across Europe' (7), it is rather doubtful whether a strict separation of the Viennese (Habsburgian) sphere from the generally European is at all possible. Riley attempts to respond to this problem by citing stylistic evidence to demonstrate the unity of the Viennese minor-key style (7). It is quite obvious that Riley does not feel entirely comfortable with this restriction, as technically it would exclude Mozart's Symphony in G minor K183, written at Salzburg, in addition to Haydn's Symphony No. 83 in G minor and his late Symphony No. 95 in C minor, written for Paris and London respectively. This prompts Riley to concede that 'the decisive factor is stylistic' (11), which is problematic for two reasons: first, Haydn's symphonies for Paris and London (discussed in chapter 7) do not, strictly speaking, belong to the Habsburg sphere of influence; they were aimed at musical centres with entirely different 'horizons of expectations'. Second, the stylistic criterion, taken seriously, would have forced him to consider an even larger number of composers and works, including Sammartini's minor-key symphonies, which are mentioned only in passing, Pieter van Maldere's works (in particular his Symphony in G minor Op. 4 No. 1, not mentioned at all) and the minor-key works by several Mannheim composers (such as Beck, Richter and Cannabich), all of which were widely disseminated throughout Europe and are said to have exerted a lasting influence on the formation of the Viennese symphonic style. At least a sample of works from this non-Viennese repertoire could have served to answer the question of how the imperial court style came about.

Despite these minor points of criticism, Riley's study may be regarded as a model for emulation in several respects. In its fruitful synthesis of music history and theory, it establishes high standards for future research on classical music. Riley succeeds particularly well in bridging the gap between music analysis (technical vocabulary) and the realm of semantics, culture and historical context by combining William E. Caplin's form-functional approach (*Classical Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)), Hepokoski and Darcy's 'Sonata Theory', Robert O. Gjerdingen's schema theory (*Music in the Galant Style* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)), and topic theory – no doubt a 'timely' methodological choice.

In addition, his style of writing is not only clear (one or two typographical slips may be removed in subsequent editions of the book), which serves the arguments and points he is making, but also enjoyable to read – a bonus that should not be left unmentioned. In summary, this book is a



must-read for everyone who has always enjoyed listening to the many tempestuous minor-key symphonies of the second half of the eighteenth century, but now wants to deepen this enjoyment by learning more about their conventions and the ways in which composers played with these conventions in this enduring repertoire.

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GRAHAM SADLER

*THE RAMEAU COMPENDIUM*

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The publication of *The Rameau Compendium* seems perfectly timed to take advantage of the recent flurry of activity associated with the sestercentennial of Jean-Philippe Rameau's death, but as author Graham Sadler remarks in the Introduction to the volume, the composer has been the focus of much scholarly and performing attention for some time. Consequently, the amount of material now available about this important composer, theorist, organist and aspiring scientist has reached significant levels, and the clear and thoughtful presentation of this quantity of information is one of the great advantages of this volume. Indeed, the brief list of contents – including a biography of the composer, a dictionary of terms relevant to Rameau, a list of works both musical and theoretical and a bibliography of sources – only hints at the wide scope of inquiry found in the *Compendium*.

That all of this is accomplished with grace and finesse is very much attributable to the author of the volume. Those who have met Graham Sadler will certainly hear his voice in every entry, in the gently authoritative writing, the ease with which even the most challenging topics are addressed and the calm assurance and deft handling of the wide variety of materials and concepts required to compile such a volume as this. This expansive approach highlights one of the fundamental strengths of the book: although this volume is ostensibly about Rameau, the breadth of Sadler's approach together with the variety of Rameau's interests will ensure that *The Rameau Compendium* is useful not only to Rameau scholars, but also to anyone interested in the musical culture of the early eighteenth century, in France and indeed throughout Europe.

Dipping into the pages of this book, the reader encounters key intellectual figures of eighteenth-century Europe such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (who wrote a physiognomic eulogy of the composer) and mathematician Louis-Bertrand Castel (with whom Rameau engaged in a long scholarly correspondence). Rameau's musical contemporaries, including composers, instrumentalists, singers and dancers, are widely represented, giving a well-rounded view of French musical life of the period. Sadler also uses the *Compendium* to guide the reader through the development of Rameau scholarship, from the earliest attempts to create a complete works series (led by Camille Saint-Saëns and Vincent D'Indy) to more recent scholarly efforts, such as the *Opera Omnia* directed by Sylvie Bousseau. The welcome inclusion of online resources acknowledges the changing shape of modern scholarship. Each entry situates its topic with reference to Rameau, and provides a short list of relevant sources.

The book is well illustrated, with images ranging from reproductions of original scores to caricatures of Rameau, whose lean physique seems to have held an irresistible allure for artists working in this style of portraiture. In addition, a plethora of musical examples support individual topic entries and explore questions of influence on Rameau, both local (Charpentier) and foreign (the Italian composer Attilio